Northern Shillukland and southern Shillukland 631
are the arches of the politico-religious kingdom of
the Shilluk of which the kingship is the keystone.
That segmentation has taken this particular form [361]
is doubtless due to the peculiar ribbon-distribution
of the Shilluk settlements.

The whole Shilluk people recognize a single 643
head and we can therefore speak of the Shilluk 173
nation and of their king, and it is with his place in
the national polity that this lecture is particularly
concerned. According to Shilluk tradition the
present king is the thirty-first of his line. All the [775]
kings are believed to be descended from Nyikang,
the leader of the Shilluk in their heroic age, who
led them into their present homeland, conquering
it from its inhabitants and dividing it among the
lineages of his followers; and Nyikang, or, as we
would say, the spirit of Nyikang, is believed to be
in every king and to have passed from king to king
down the line of his successors. Nyikang is thus
a mythological personification of the timeless kingship which itself symbolizes the national structure,
a changeless moral order.

The rule of succession is that only a son of a king
can be invested with the kingship. As many sons 644
of kings have never succeeded to the throne, there 565
614

The development of the Shilluk kingship has 565
thus produced, though not in a very pronounced 644
or rigid form, a social hierarchy of royal house, nobility (other members of the royal clan), and commoners (including persons of client origin).

THE KINGSHIP

If we are to understand the place of the kingship in 643●
Shilluk society we must, I think, beware of attempts 114
to define it in terms of judicial and administrative 642
functions and view it rather as a ritual office and in a wider political context. In 1903 Father Tappi wrote that the authority of the king is 'absolute'.[1] Professor and Mrs Seligman have described the king as 'absolute head—temporal and spiritual—of a state whose territory is divided into a number of provinces, each administered by a chief directly responsible to the sovereign and acting as his proxy',[2] and Professor Westermann has also written of the power of the king as 'absolute'.[3] Father Hofmayr says that 'Mit dem Regierungsantritt ist der König Herr des Landes, das er nach Belieben vergeben

---

[1] P. C. Tappi, 'Notes Ethnologiques sur les Chillouks', *Bull. Soc. Khediv. de Géog.* (1903), p. 122.

[2] *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (1932), p. 39.

[3] *Op. cit.* p. xlvii.

•643 kann, und Herr sogar des Eigentums seiner Unter-
114 tanen'.[1] These statements would seem to require
642 some modification. As Mr Pumphrey has pointed
[177] out, it is unlikely that the so-called 'provinces' were
in fact more than districts or that they were in any sense administrative departments before they were made into something of the kind by foreign governments.[2] Moreover, though doubtless the king exercised considerable influence in the country and may have confirmed settlement chiefs in office, he did not nominate them. They were heads of settlements in virtue of their position as heads of lineages dominant in those settlements and although they had certain duties to the king it is, I think, wrong to describe them as being in any sense administrative officials. To use such terms as 'state', 'government', and 'administration' in speaking of the Shilluk political system would appear to me, in the light of what is now known of it, to be a mistake.

643 It is true that the more recent authorities imply
114 rather than explicitly state what in their opinion
692 is the position of the king. Mr Howell and Mr
Thomson speak of 'the theoretical omnipotence' of the king and of a 'theoretically omnipotent

---

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 150–1.
[2] *Op. cit.* pp. 18–19.

monarchy'.[1] Mr Pumphrey says that in the old 643 •
days 'justice was probably rough and large-scale 114
fighting more prevalent than litigation'.[2] Indeed, 692
feuds appear to have been rampant in the past,
and it is not very clear how they were composed.
We are told that major disputes were sometimes
brought before the king, but he can hardly be said
to have tried such cases. If he intervened at all it
was to support partially one side to a quarrel. We 643
are told that when a settlement waged 'unjustifiable' 114
war on another or refused persistently to 721
listen to the king he might raise a 'royal levy' from 701
the adjacent settlements and with this force and his 692
own retainers raid the recalcitrants, seizing their
cattle and burning their homesteads. He kept some
of the cattle for himself and the rest were taken by
those who supported his action. The raiding force
would generally be strong enough to discourage
resistance.[3] Compensation for injury seems, therefore, 114
to have been obtained by self-help, sometimes 643
backed by royal intervention. Without confirmation 692
I am not inclined to accept Father Hofmayr's
statement that compensation for homicide was

---

[1] Howell, *op. cit.* p. 57; P. P. Howell and W. P. G. Thomson, 'The Death of a Reth of the Shilluk and the Installation of his Successor', *S.N. and R.* (1946), p. 8.

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 19.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 12.

114 paid to the king alone.[1] A different picture of the
•643 king's part in the settlement of disputes is painted
692 by Mr Oyler of the American Mission, who witnessed the settlement of a feud, which had been going on in a district for more than three years, by the joint intervention of the king and the Government. From his account it is evident that the king could not have imposed a settlement had the disputants not been ready to accept one, that the part played in it by the king was that of peacemaker and not of judge, and that his participation can better be described as sacerdotal than as governmental.[2] The king of the Shilluk reigns but does not govern.

643 The king's sacerdotal role in the settlement of
793 feuds gives us a clue to what is confirmed by a great weight of further evidence: his sacral position in Shilluk society. Our authorities, indeed, speak of the king as the 'Hoherpriester des Landes',[3] of 'the royal and priestly line' and of its 'priestly function',[4] and of the king as 'the high priest of the tribal religion'.[5] Both his functions and his status are primarily of a ritual order. He makes sacrifices on

---

Op. cit. p. 102.

[2] 'The Shilluk Peace Ceremony', *S.N. and* [illegible] (1920), pp. 296–9.

[3] Hofmayr, *op. cit.* p. 152.

[4] Banholzer and Giffen, *op. cit.* p. 197.

[5] Pumphrey, *op. cit.* p. 19.

He¹ makes sacrifices on important occasions, especially for rain and for victory in war, and it is his duty to provide cattle for the sacred herds of Nyikang at Nyilual and Wau and a canoe for Nyikang's shrine at Nyibodho. Nyikang, the culture hero of the Shilluk, their first king, and the creator of their nation, is immanent in him and this makes him the double pivot of Shilluk society, the political head of the nation and the centre of the national cult. The kingship is the common symbol of the Shilluk people and, Nyikang being immortal, an abiding institution which binds past and present and future generations. 643 793 [782] [173]

The correspondence of political structure with religious cult can be seen at every point of the structure. The territorial segments of the nation and their association with lineages is, as we have noted, validated by the myth of Nyikang's parcelling out of his conquests among the clans, the strands of which are, moreover, caught up into a single mythological point, Nyikang. Some trace their descent from his companions, some from his collateral relatives, others from the original in- yet others from men who played some part in his saga. The lineage heads who are the chiefs of settlements have ritual duties to the kingship: in 182 613 631 [773] 182 631 622 778

¹ [i.e., the King. -Analyst]

182
622
631 particular, ceremonial services at the king's investiture,
778 the building of huts at Fashoda, which is
both the royal capital and the cult centre of Nyikang,
and the upkeep of Nyikang's other shrines and
182 those of past kings. These shrines are widely distributed
778 throughout the country so that every
[794] section of it participates in the cult of Nyikang,
who is, it must be borne in mind, not only the semidivine
hero of Shilluk mythology but also the king
at every period of their history. Indeed, the shrines
of Nyikang, what Professor Seligman calls his
cenotaphs, are indistinguishable from the tomb-shrines
of dead kings and they have the same
ceremonial functions in the life of the people: in
the rain-making ceremonies, at harvest time, and
182 in times of sickness and pestilence.[1] The religion
●643 and cosmogony of the Shilluk are bound up with
the political system through the identification of
Nyikang with the king. The kingship stands at the
centre of Shilluk moral values.

[775 We can only understand the place of the kingship
771] in Shilluk society when we realize that it is not the

---

[1] Prof. C. G. Seligman, 'The Cult of Nyakang and the Divine Kings of the Shilluk', *Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories* (1911), pp. 221 and 225.

182
Nyikang who is the medium between man and God 643 ●
(*Juok*) and is believed in some way to participate in [771
God as he does in the king. 'Nyikang is the *reth* 775
but the *reth* is not Nyikang.'[1] The participation of 776]
Nyikang in the king raises the kingship to a plane
above all sectional interests, whether local or of
descent. All the Shilluk share in the kingship, [185]
however their loyalties may pull them apart in
other matters, because in Nyikang are centred all
those interests which are common to all the people:
success in war against foreigners and the fertility
and health of men, cattle, crops, and of those wild
beasts which are of service to man. Professor
Westermann tells us that 'everything they value
most in their national and private life, has its origin
in him'.[2] Mr Howell and Mr Thomson tell us that
when a king dies the Shilluk say '*piny bugon*', 'there
is no land'[3]—the centre of the Shilluks' world has
fallen out. It is restored by the investiture of a new
king, for though kings may perish the kingship,
that is Nyikang, endures. Mr Oyler tells us: 'They
say that if Nikawng should die, the whole Shilluk
race would perish'.[4]

---

[1] Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 8. [2] *Op. cit.* p. xliii.

[3] Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 18.

[4] Rev. D. S. Oyler, 'Nikawng and the Shilluk Migration', *S.N. and R.* (1918), p. 115.

643 Because of the mystical values associated with
783 the kingship and centred in the person of the king he must keep himself in a state of ritual purity, by performing certain actions and observing certain prescriptions, and in a state of physical perfection. Our authorities say that the Shilluk believe that should the king become physically weak the whole people might suffer, and, further, that if a king becomes sick or senile he should be killed to avoid some grave national misfortune, such as defeat in war, epidemic, or famine. The king must be killed to save the kingship and with it the whole Shilluk people.

643 This would seem to be the reasoning behind
783 Shilluk statements that the king may be strangled,
114 or suffocated, or walled up in a hut and left to die
[766] there, if he fails to satisfy his wives or shows signs of illness or senility. In view of the great importance Sir James Frazer and others have attached to these statements I must confess that I consider them of interest more as an indication of the mystical nature of the kingship than as evidence that the

or for the reasons given. It is true that Professor and Mrs Seligman state categorically that 'there is not the least doubt that kings of the Shilluk were killed with due ceremony when they began to show signs of old age or ill health',[1] but I have failed 643 to find convincing evidence that any Shilluk king 783 was put to death in either circumstance, although 114 some of the kings must have qualified long before they died for execution on the grounds alleged; and [766] I am persuaded that the story of kings being walled up in a hut is a confusion arising from the usual walling up of the remains of a dead king, the bones being buried after decomposition of the flesh. In the absence of other than traditional evidence of royal executions in Shilluk history and in view of the contradictory accounts cited I conclude that the ceremonial putting to death of kings is probably a fiction. It possibly arises from the dual personality [761] of the king, who is both himself and Nyikang, both an individual and an institution, which accounts also for the linguistic convention that a king does not die but disappears just as Nyikang is said not to have died but to have disappeared, in his case in a storm. I will return to this question of regicide after I have reviewed the procedures of election shed on the nature of the kingship.

---

[1] *Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories*, p. 221; also *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, pp. 90–2. Howell and Thomson say (*op. cit.* p. 19) that ceremonial strangulation is traditional for all members of the royal clan.

ROYAL ELECTION AND INVESTITURE

● 643 114 The phases of the investiture of a new king were excellently described by Mr P. Munro[1] of the Sudan Political Service, who was an eye-witness of the investiture of King Fafiti Yor, the twenty-ninth king, in 1918. However, the recent accounts by Mr Howell and Mr Thomson, who were able to make detailed observations on what happened on the death of King Fafiti Yor in 1943 and on the election and investiture of his successor, King Anei, in 1944 and again (Mr Thomson) on the death of King Anei and on the election and investiture of King Dak Fadiet in 1945, are descriptively fuller and analytically more illuminating and are therefore followed in the present summary.

643 766 On the death of a king his corpse is walled for some months in a hut and his bones are then buried in his natal hamlet, and not in the royal capital. The remains are disposed of, and the mortuary ceremonies conducted, by royal clients, *ororo*, and [614] members of the royal clan (the head of which is not the ruling king but the chief of Fadiang settlement).

---

[1] P. Munro, 'Installation of the Ret of the Chol (King of the Shilluks)', *S.N. and R.* (1918).

It is more a clan, than a national, affair. The election of the new king, which takes place a few days after his predecessor's death, is, on the contrary, an affair of the whole Shilluk people, who participate in the election through the chiefs of the north and the south, to whom I have already referred. 643 766 [614]

These persons reflect in their roles in the election and in the ceremonies of investiture the structural dichotomy of Shillukland. We have seen that the Shilluk kingdom has a double configuration, political in its territorial setting, in its division into north and south and marches and settlements, and ritual in its religious setting, its arrangement in relation to the cult of Nyikang. In the ritual configuration the dichotomy is represented by the ceremonial division of the country into Gol Dhiang the northern division, and Gol Nyikang, the southern division, which correspond structurally to the political division of the kingdom into Ger, the northern half, and Luak, the southern half, though geographically they are not exactly coterminous. The chiefs of the ceremonial divisions in this ritual representation of the Shilluk polity are also the political chiefs of Golbany and Kwom, the two settlements which are to the north and south adjacent to the capital and cult-centre, 182 631 643

182 631 ●643 Fashoda, which is almost where the halves meet and is the focal point in the ceremonies of investiture.

631 643 666 I wish to emphasize that the procedure of election ensures that the prince selected to be king must have the backing of the whole country. Mr Thomson tells us that 'the choice rests entirely with the chiefs of Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang'[1] and cannot take place unless they agree, and it is clear that agreement does not depend on the personal feelings of the two men but that they are spokesmen for the halves of the country they represent. The other members of what Mr Howell and Mr Thomson call the 'electoral college' and which they say 'is a very conscious survival of the traditional structure of the Shilluk tribe'[2] have 'only to listen to the decision'[3] of these two men. The other members are the two influential chiefs of the northern and southern marches, Muomo and Tonga, nine chiefs of settlements who are de-

Nyikang divided Shillukland when he conquered and settled his followers in it, and three important

---

[1] W. P. G. Thomson, 'Further Notes on the Death of a Reth of the Shilluk, 1945' (manuscript).

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 29.

[3] Thomson, *op. cit.*

chiefs of branches of the royal clan which have 631
become dominant in powerful settlements in the 643
country. Thus the backing, if only passive, of all 666
parts of the kingdom is necessary before a prince can be invested with the kingship. The participation of the halves of Shillukland in the making of a king is further emphasized in the intense opposition between them expressed in the drama of the investiture, which at the same time enacts the conquest and settlement of the country by Nyikang and his followers.

182
Without the collective participation of the halves 643
of the country the investiture of a king, which takes 631
place about a year after his election, cannot be held. The ceremonies would seem to have precisely this function, for the kingship represents the whole country and a king can only be made by rites in which the whole country takes part. Hence also in the investiture all sections of the population are represented. The royal clan, its dispossessed branch, [614]
the commoner clans, especially those whose ancestors were among the original followers of Nyikang, and the client clans, all have essential roles in the drama. Different settlements in different districts of Shillukland and different clans [293]
are responsible for performing various parts of the [778]

182 ceremonial and for providing the various objects
631 required in its enactment: silver and cloth from the
● 643 Arabs of the north (presumably obtained by raiding
[293] in the old days), ostrich feathers for the effigies of
[778] Nyikang and his son, skins of the rare Mrs Gray
antelope from Fanyikang island for the ceremonial robes of the king and the other more important participants in the ceremony, sacred spears, royal drums, fibre of the dom palm for ceremonial robes, cowrie shells, new huts, beasts for sacrifice, and so forth.

643 I will recount briefly the chief phases by which
778 the kingship envelops the king-elect. The effigy of Nyikang, which is kept in the principal of his provincial shrines, at Akurwa in the most northerly district of Shillukland, is brought out by his priests, to whom the king-elect has to make considerable gifts for their service in this matter, and together with the effigy of his son Dak is taken to beat the northern bounds of the kingdom and then southwards, supported by an army of the north, to fight the king-elect for possession of the capital. As the effigies pass through each district the people gather to pay their respects to Nyikang and to escort him to the next district, for it appears that during the interregnum the effigy is believed to contain the

spirit of Nyikang, to be Nyikang in fact. Nyikang's 643 ●
army of the north meets in mock combat an army 778
of the south, supporting the king-elect, at the
Arepejur watercourse just outside the royal capital.
In the words of Mr Howell and Mr Thomson, this
meeting in battle of the two armies on the Arepejur,
the boundary between north and south, 'symbolizes the ceremonial division of the country into
two moieties. The balance between them is strongly
emphasized at all points.'[1] The army of the king-elect is defeated and he is captured by Nyikang and
taken by him to the capital. The kingship captures
the king. There Nyikang is placed on the royal
stool. After a while he is taken off it and the king- [775]
elect sits on it in his stead and the spirit of Nyikang
enters into him, causing him to tremble, and he
becomes king, that is he becomes possessed by
Nyikang. The concluding ritual acts follow. The
new king has married a girl, traditionally provided
by a certain clan, and this girl has an important role
in the ceremonies of investiture. After the king's
enthronement Nyikang seizes the girl and refuses
to surrender her to the king on the ground that she
was married with cattle from the royal herd, which
is Nyikang's herd, and is therefore Nyikang's wife.

---

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 48.

643 778 On this issue Nyikang and the king summon their supporters to a second mock battle, in which the king captures the girl. Nyikang thereupon pays the king a visit to make his peace with him. On the following morning the king receives the homage and exhortations of the chiefs and undertakes to be a good king. Nyikang does not again contest the king's authority and some weeks later the effigies are sent back to the shrine at Akurwa.

643 775 Even so brief a sketch as I have given enables us to perceive the basic symbolism of the events of investiture. Nyikang is always king of the Shilluk and when a king dies his spirit is conceived of as departing in some manner from the king's body to take up its abode in the new effigy specially made for its accommodation at the shrine of Akurwa. By entering anew into the body of a prince Nyikang once again rules in his capital. The most adequate interpretation of the succession of rites of investiture would therefore seem to be that when the effigy and the king fight for possession of the capital the army of the effigy is victorious because Nyikang is in the effigy, but when they fight again over the king's bride the army of the king is victorious because Nyikang is now in the king. Power has passed from the Nyikang of the

shrine of Akurwa to the Nyikang of the king in 643 775
Fashoda. The king is now reverenced and the
effigy is sent back to Akurwa.

It is Nyikang, mark you, the symbol of the whole 643
Shilluk people, who is the king-maker. The king- 644
ship belongs to all the people and not to the royal 614
clan. Indeed, I think it significant that when
Nyikang captures the king-elect the latter is ostentatiously surrounded by a block of his own clan. In
this connection it is to be hoped that more will be
learnt about the distribution now and in the past
of the royal clan. The traditional home of Nyikang [173]
was Fanyikang, a settlement in the south, and
the ritual equivalent to the southern half of the
kingdom is Gol Nyikang. It seems likely on [174]
these, and on other, grounds that the royal clan
was at one time found chiefly, perhaps only, in the
south and spread from there to those northern
settlements in which it is found to-day, as has
happened among the closely related Anuak people.
Hence in the ceremonies of investiture it seems as
though the Shilluk people, represented by Nyikang
and the army of the north, capture the king and
take him away from his clan, represented by the
army of the south, to be the head of the whole
nation. The ritual of investiture appears to be an

614 enactment of this central dogma, that it is not an
● 643 individual who belongs to a particular clan or to
644 a particular part of the country who is king, but Nyikang in whom are the continuity and welfare of the whole Shilluk people.

ROYAL SUCCESSION AND REGICIDE

643 We may now examine, in the light of what we have
114 learnt about the position of the kingship in Shilluk society and particularly about the polarity so clearly expressed in the ceremonies I have reviewed, the mode of succession to royal office and the tradition of regicide which is so closely connected with it. Although Professor and Mrs Seligman say, 'We found no basis for the belief, common among Europeans in the Shilluk country, that there were two, or even three or four, branches of the royal house from which the kings were elected in turn',[1] the early *Sudan Intelligence Reports* make it clear that this was the case in recent decades and also that rivalry between claimants to the kingship in
[631] the second half of the nineteenth century was connected with the balanced opposition between north and south, for the halves of the kingdom fairly

---

[1] *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, pp. 44–5.

consistently supported rival candidates.

consistently supported rival candidates. Moreover, it is difficult to believe that the practice of the present day, by which it is more or less understood that the surviving lines of kings take it in turn to provide the king,[1] is new. A collateral royal line does not to-day contest an election on the understanding that they have next turn. The custom is for the reigning king to take under his wing a scion of a rival line and by so doing to indicate him as his successor, though he cannot nominate him and his choice may not be followed by the people. When this prince becomes king he takes under his wing a son of his protector. The reigning king insures by this convention against both rebellion by a rival line and his own line being excluded from the kingship in the future. 643 114

There can be no doubt that in recent times there has been an alternation on the throne of branches of the royal house, nor that the alternation is related to the structural dichotomy of Shillukland. We are told that if the ceremonial chiefs of the north and south fail to reach agreement in the election of a new king the chiefs of the northern settlements follow their representative and the 643 631 669

---

[1] Westermann, *op. cit.* p. xlvi; Hofmayr, *op. cit.* p. 145; Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 27.

631
643 chiefs of the southern settlements follow their
669 representative and the issue is fought out. It
would seem probable that when there is disagree-
174 ment it is an expression not of divergence of opinion
about the merits of the candidates but of local
631 loyalties in which different members of the royal
643 house are associated with different parts of Shilluk-
644 land. Whether disputed succession in the past was
a product of local rivalries cannot perhaps now be
determined, but it seems likely in view of the fact
that in earlier times the king ruled from the settle-
ment in which he was brought up or moved from
one settlement to another and did not have a fixed
residence at the central and neutral point of
Fashoda.[1] I would also suggest that the associ-
ation of princes with settlements and districts is
clearly related to the custom by which they are
brought up away from the capital. It is probable
that the backing given by north and south to candi-
dates for the kingship in past times arose from the
fact that some princes were brought up in the north
and some in the south. That this is the case is clear
[114] from Father Hofmayr's detailed notes on each of

---

[1] Seligman, *Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories*, p. 229, citing information given by Father Banholzer and Dr Lambie; Westermann, *op. cit.* p. 138; Hofmayr, *op. cit.* p. 76.

the Shilluk kings.[1] It is easy to determine because 174
the shrines of dead kings are still maintained to-day 631
where they were born and brought up. I would 643
further suggest that the maternal descent of princes 644
may be of great significance in that it may be the [114]
association of maternal lineages with settlements [602]
which attaches local loyalties to a particular prince
or to a particular branch of the royal house. It is
therefore important that the maternal clans of the
Shilluk kings should be recorded by some future
observer.

The Shilluk statement that kings should be put 643
to death if they grow old or become sick and their 578
further statement that any prince may at any time 669
challenge the king to mortal combat, in which the
king may not call for help, cannot, I think, like the
mode of succession, be understood except in relation to the political structure as a whole. There is [173
only traditional evidence that any king has ever 114]
been killed in either way but, as Mr Howell and
Mr Thomson point out,[2] the belief that kings have
been, or might be, so killed has political implications. The assertion that a sick or old king should
be killed probably means that when some disaster
falls upon the Shilluk nation the tensions inherent

---

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 59–136.

[2] *Op. cit.* p. 11.

●643 in its political structure become manifest in the
578 attribution of the disaster to his failing powers.
669 The unpopularity which national misfortune brings
on a king enables a prince to raise rebellion. The
643 belief that a king may legitimately be assassin-
669 ated by a personal rival is not substantiated by
173 recent Shilluk history any more than the belief
that he may be put to death, but it draws some
support from tradition and from anxiety on this
score shown by the king and his attendants and
from the precautions he takes to protect himself
against assassination, especially between his elec-
tion and investiture and during the ceremonies of
investiture. However, the evidence suggests that the
anxiety may not be expressed, nor the precautions
taken, solely on account of the king's feelings of
insecurity but partly, if not chiefly, because he is
compelled by tradition to act furtively. Moreover,
it is difficult to reconcile the tradition that kings
were killed in this fashion with the account we
have of royal election and investiture. On the
other hand there seems little doubt that Shilluk
kings generally met a violent death. My own
[114] opinion is that we must interpret Shilluk state-
ments about the matter as indicating not that any
prince may slay the king on his own initiative, as

173
643
669
[114]

has been suggested,[1] but that any prince may lead a rebellion as the candidate of discontent, particularly of the part of the kingdom to which the prince belongs. If the king has lost support in the part to which he belongs he will probably lose also both the resulting contest and his life in it. This is the conclusion I have drawn from Father Hofmayr's involved chronicle of the Shilluk kings.[2] It must here be remarked that Shilluk rebellions have not been made against the kingship. On the contrary, they were made to preserve the values embodied in the kingship which were being weakened, or it was believed so, by the individual who held office. They were not revolutions but rebellions against the king in the name of the kingship.

CONCLUSION

121
643

The divine kingship, to one, perhaps the best known, of the examples of which I have devoted this lecture, has been extensively written about by ethnologists, particularly in reference to its occur-

---

[1] Hofmayr, *op. cit.* p. 64; Prof. and Mrs Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, pp. 90–1. Howell and Thomson (*op. cit.* p. 11 *et passim*) are more reserved.

[2] *Op. cit.* pp. 59–136.

114
177

IN ANY
case, while exogamy is generally observed, the association of particular 825
groups of men and animals seems to make no great emotional appeal [781]
to the Shilluk—to be but little loaded with affect—compared with
the similar feelings among the Dinka. We may also refer to the
suggestion put forward by Hofmayr,[1] that the incoming Shilluk
had a definite totemic system, which became less important as the
cult of Nyakang developed and the newcomers mixed with the earlier
inhabitants of what is now the Shilluk country. Evidence for or
against this hypothesis may be forthcoming when we know more
of the beliefs of the Luo and Anuak. We therefore leave the subject
with the observation that the existence of a partial totemism of
the Dinka pattern among the Shilluk would be explained if the earlier
inhabitants absorbed by Nyakang and his horde—it will be
remembered that these included animals which he turned into men—
were Dinka, or folk with kindred beliefs.

Dr. Tucker has given us some interesting information which, 304
though it does not actually concern totemism, might at first sight 789
be confused with it and is worthy of further investigation. The
inhabitants of a village, Pathuor, mark a scorpion several inches in
length in raised cicatricial tissue on the shoulder—left for men and
right for women so that it is not hidden by the shoulder cloth. The
reason they give is that they "desire to cultivate the strength of
the scorpion"; yet they kill without scruple scorpions that they
find in their huts. Other designs scarred on the shoulder, described
by Dr. Tucker, include the horse, tortoise, aeroplane, and the sun.
He reports a most curious instance of cicatrization as a result of
a village quarrel. One village, Paalo, decided that it would no 304
longer eat the fish *okok*, because the village Pajur, with which it was 578
at enmity, is situated at the edge of a creek where many *okok* are
caught. The Paalo proceeded to represent an *okok* in raised cicatrices
on the shoulder; Pajur retaliated by avoiding lemons—because [245]
Paalo, living near the mission, grows lemons—and they scarred [177]
lemons on their shoulders. This was about a year ago; goodwill
now reigns between the villages, and consequently the *okok* and the
lemon are no longer avoided.

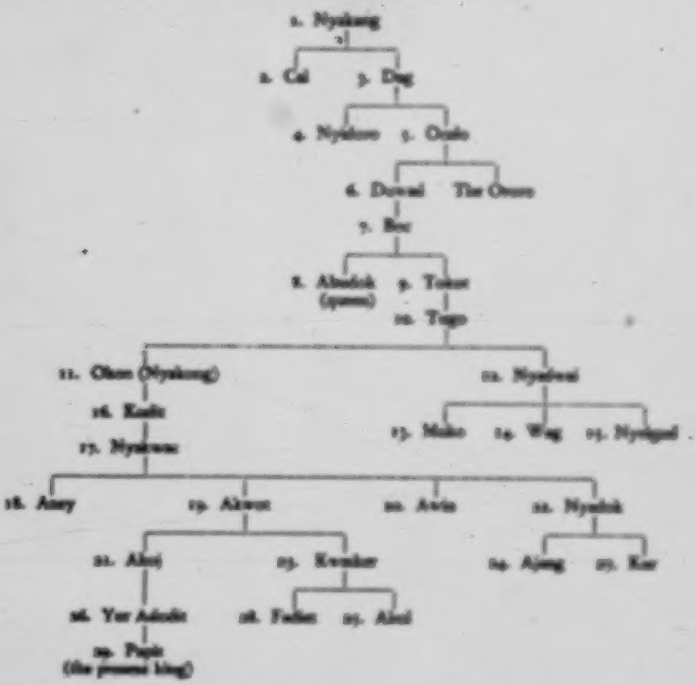
Turning now to the king and royal family, we would emphasize 643
that the Shilluk king is the supreme spiritual and temporal ruler,
and that to separate his functions—as for the sake of clarity we are
about to do—is an artificial device. Nevertheless, we shall now

---

[1] Op. cit., [illegible].

● 643 limit ourselves as far as possible to the temporal side of the royal functions and postpone our account of the king's spiritual duties and privileges until we consider religion. With such an artificial division a certain amount of inconsistency and overlap is inevitable; for instance, the succession to the throne will be treated under religion, although the election is largely a temporal matter.

643 173 114 We accept Father Hofmayr's genealogical table of the royal house rather than those of previous inquirers, including our own,[1] on account of his excellent panel of native informants. It is this table, with spelling modified, that we now reproduce.


1. Nyakang
2. Cal
3. Dak
4. Nyadoro
5. Odak
6. Duwad
The Omoro
7. Bwoc
8. Abudok (queen)
9. Tokot
10. Tugo
11. Okon (Nyakong)
12. Nyadwai
13. Muko
14. Wak
15. Nyakwaj
16. Kudit
17. Nyakwac
18. Anny
19. Akwot
20. Awin
22. Nyadok
21. Akoj
23. Kwatker
24. Ajang
25. Kur
26. Yor Adodit
28. Fadiet
27. Akol
30. Fafiti
(the present king)

643 173 The Shilluk king rules by divine right as a direct descendant of Nyakang, the first Shilluk king. We found no basis for the belief, common among Europeans in the Shilluk country, that there were

---

113 [1] "Cult of Nyakang and the Divine Kings of the Shilluk": *Fourth Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories*, vol. B, Khartoum, 1911.

two, or even three or four, branches of the royal house from 643
which the kings were elected in turn. From the genealogy it 173
may be seen that sons of kings have succeeded their fathers but that
this is by no means the rule; the succession may pass to brothers,
ortho-cousins, or paternal nephew, and in one case a paternal uncle
succeeded his brother's son. What is clear is that all recent kings
have been descendants of the brothers Akwot (19) and Nyadok (22).
Each of these kings had two sons who eventually came to the throne,
and all their direct descendants are eligible from the Shilluk point
of view. But we could not discover any rule dictating from which
of these houses the royal candidates for the throne should be chosen.
It is certain that each house would press its claim. There seem very [648]
good reasons why the sons of the twenty-seventh and the twenty-
eighth kings have not come to the throne, and apart from Government
influence it may be that their lines will have less claim in the future,
since Kur, the twenty-seventh king, did not meet his death as a Shilluk
king should but was deposed by the Government and died in confine-
ment in the northern Sudan. Fadiet, the twenty-eighth king,
succeeded with the approval of the Government, but many of the
Shilluk did not recognize him as legitimate during the lifetime of
Kur. It must have been quite impossible to carry out the ritual
enthronement in the correct spirit while a former king was still living;
certainly a son of Kur could not have come to the throne during
the lifetime of his father, while as to Fadiet, he was neither popular
nor efficient.

Tribute is paid to the king, but his sovereignty is largely exercised 631
through the high-chiefs (*jang dwong*) of the great provinces into which 635
the realm is divided. The selection of these officers—who tend to 643
be hereditary—is in the hands of the king, but the approval of the
community is sought, and it is probably these chiefs who form the
"great council" mentioned by Hofmayr, which is summoned by the
king in exceptional cases.[1] Hofmayr also states that the king's
messengers are usually relatives of the king. The high-chiefs of the
provinces accompany the king on his journeys.

The greatest respect and honour is shown to the king. In the old 643
days he was not allowed to go to battle, and even now he keeps 644
up considerable state and has much authority. Even a royal son
addresses the king with face somewhat averted, the left hand hiding
the mouth and lower part of the face; this he does sitting at ease,

---

[1] Op. cit., 191–2.

● 643 but others should crouch with head turned over the right shoulder,
644 and perhaps with one hand shading the face. Aker, widow of two
kings and one of our best informants, used to delight to mimic the
respectful manner in which she would serve the king, presenting food
on her knees with head averted, and then move away kneeling to
crouch with averted face while the king was eating, her garment
being held to her side by her elbow; after the king had eaten she
would pour water on his hands, still with averted face.

643 Disputes may be settled by the local or district chiefs, but an appeal
to the king is always possible. District and village chiefs are assisted
[692] by the local elders in the administration of justice. The method
[65] of raising the tribute to the king has not been investigated, but examples
in the following pages (confirmed by Westermann's account) will
show that certain clans owed special duties to the king; indeed, anyone
killing a leopard must send its skin to the royal household, while the
gyek antelope is specially hunted to obtain skins for the king. As
the fountain of justice, the king kept for himself by far the greater part
643 of the fines for homicide and other grave offences. The fine for
681 man-killing was usually ten head of cattle, but sometimes more was
levied; a girl might be taken in lieu of the cattle, when the king
would allow the girl to marry but would keep the bride-wealth;
or a girl and boy might be kept as hostages by the king until the
cattle were paid. The king might give one or two head of cattle
to the family of the deceased as compensation; this, however, did
[628] not always settle the matter, and a blood feud might start and be
continued until the balance of dead was even, often not only families
but whole villages becoming involved.

635 Hofmayr, quoting Father Banholzer, describes the investiture of
a high chief of one of the ten main provinces.[1] It is obvious that
577 his functions are regarded as more than merely administrative, and
that his correct ethical behaviour is almost the main concern of the
old man—one of his future sub-chiefs—who, clasping his feet,
recites the duties of his new office. He should let no stranger go
hungry, he should use no abusive language, but be just and leave
the houses and women of his underlings alone. The new high-chief
takes oath to observe these duties, in token of which he licks the
blade of a spear, presses it to his forehead, and then waves it over the
ox he sacrifices. He remains in seclusion in his hut for four days;

---

[1] Op. cit., 193. These great district chiefs are known as *Jago Duong*. This is not a technical but rather a courtesy title, lit. "big chief". All chiefs are *jago*.

635
only after this is he "the chosen of God" (*aremyi Juok*) and *fa* 577
incumbent of his new office. The first ceremonial duty of the high-chief is to visit the king, who presents him with an ox, more costly [434]
presents being made to the high-chiefs of Mwom and Tonga. Every high-chief has his assistant (*ryel kwome*), who exercises authority as occasion requires. The village chiefs are chosen by their communities, and we believe all these offices to be in the main hereditary, 622
though further investigation is here necessary, as it is with regard to [645]
the ministerial council, mentioned by Hofmayr, whose members are selected by the king.

Fashoda—not to be confused with Kodok, the Fashoda of international fame—is the royal capital, *fa reth* ("the place of the king"), 644 173
from which the king has ruled for many decades. Yet it was not always so: Father Banholzer told us that formerly each Shilluk king reigned from and was buried in his native village. Fenikang is the traditional capital of Nyakang and probably of his immediate successors. Perhaps, too, some of the early kings ruled the country from Tonga (Doleib Hill). Tugo is said to have been the first king to live at Fashoda; whether this is correct or not, Fashoda certainly was not the *fa reth* of all the kings who succeeded him, though Nyadwai and Yor Adodit ruled the country from villages in its neighbourhood. Nyadwai lived and died at Kodok, where in 1909 we were shown the remains of the tree which according to tradition sprang from his grave; actually the association seems to have been that it stood near his dwelling and that he would often sit under it. Malakal and Walajok are also said to have been capitals in their time.

The king and his many wives live at Fashoda (Pl. V, Fig. 1). 644
The king's dwelling when we saw it in 1910 consisted of four huts, 342
no better built than those of his people and lacking the ostrich-egg and spear of the royal shrines. They stood well above the rest of the settlement on an artificial mound, called Anarwic (shown on Pl. VI), which may have been some ten feet high, and was said to have been built by the tenth king, Tugo.

The king observes the same marriage prohibitions as his people, 582
even remote relatives on both sides of the family being forbidden; 643
thus the king and all male descendants of the king must marry commoners, while daughters of the king should not marry at all, [177]
though foreign influence is, we believe, slowly modifying the old practice. Mr. Heasty writes that unless the king takes a [583]

582 girl in compensation for some great favour shown to her father
583 he pays bride-wealth, but he fixes the amount himself, usually
● 643 double that paid by a commoner. There will, however, be no
negotiation, nor would a commoner ever attempt to recover cattle
643 of the bride-wealth that had died. The king owes no respect to
mother-in-law or other relatives by marriage, who all treat him with
the same reverence as do other unconnected commoners. No Shilluk
[593 woman is particularly reverential to her husband, nor would she take
582] a beating with resigned submission, but a royal wife should kneel
with bowed head to receive a whipping should the king wish to punish
643 her. Mr. Heasty informs us that one wife is always appointed head
644 wife and is treated with great respect by all, including the king himself.
She acts as intermediary between the other women and the king;
she is an elderly woman, usually a widow of a previous king, and holds
her appointment until displaced by the king. The king would seldom
[582 take a wife from the *aworo* unless she were an unusually attractive
565] woman, because no son of an *aworo* can ever become king.

The king's children are never born in Fashoda. In the fourth
644 or fifth month of her pregnancy the expectant mother is sent
591 with attendants and cattle to some distant village, and here she remains
under the protection of the chief until the child is weaned, when
she may return to Fashoda. During each subsequent pregnancy
she goes to a different village. The child is brought up in its native
village, and the cattle that the mother brings with her are its portion.
In this village he (or she) should be buried. No special conditions
are required for the selection of a locality beyond the strength and
discretion of the chief under whose charge the child will grow up
and the presence of good grazing ground for the royal herd.[1] Every
644 royal son is recognized as a potential king and is treated with the
565 utmost indulgence and respect; the royal daughters also have their
privileges, but are not so highly regarded. The royal daughters
[582] are not allowed to marry, it being alleged that it would not be fitting
for a woman of royal birth to marry a commoner, while she could not
marry a *nyireth*, or the descendants of one, as this would be incestuous.
[836] Royal daughters may have lovers, but must not bear children.
Mr. Heasty informs us that they may select whom they will, *however*

---

[1] Mr. Heasty considers that the reason for sending the royal wives away is that the king is ambitious for his sons and hopes that they will own villages for themselves; if they were born in Fashoda they would have no villages of their own. Foreign wives of the king are sent to Shilluk villages in the same way as are Shilluk women.

644 566 [836] or commoners, and even close relatives, including half-brothers by the same father, though connection with a full brother or a uterine half-brother would not be permitted. [562] Royal daughters are treated with great respect, may exercise considerable influence in district affairs, and when elderly may help and advise the local chief, but they never become guardians of shrines as do the king's wives and widows.

● 643 669 We did not hear of the rivalry between princes leading to actual warfare for the throne, though considering how commonly the Shilluk quarrel among themselves this seemed probable, and some of the old traditional quarrels between North and South may have originated in such rivalry. [173] It is related that Nyakwac killed the surviving children of his great uncle Nyadwai (the twelfth king), though three of them had already reigned before him, but we do not think this was a common practice.

644 566 The children of the king are called *nyireth*; his grandchildren are *nyinyireth*, and his great grandchildren are *kwanyireth*; their children again may be called *kwanyireth*. The four generations are regarded as of royal blood in descending degrees, and even *kwanyireth* follow the [304] royal practice of retaining their lower central incisors instead of having them knocked out as commoners do, but the children of *kwanyireth* are treated as commoners. The descendants of the king form a privileged group; both sons, grandsons, and their children are called *kwareth*. The title *kwanyireth dwong* (great *kwanyireth*) is given to the first generation of *kwanyireth* or to a *kwanyireth* who has become a chief.

566 Apart from the king and the royal family, but having the closest ceremonial connection with the former, are the *ororo*,[1] who trace their origin to the fifth Shilluk king, Ocalo. They play a prominent part

---

[173] [1] Rightly qualified by Mr. Munro as a "class . . . full of mystery" in his "Installation of the Ret of the Chol (King of the Shilluks)", which we reprint as an appendix. They certainly require further study. Hofmayr states that royal descendants become *ororo* after a special degradation ceremony which has to be carried out by stealth. His account is far from clear, but actually he agrees that the only *ororo* are the descendants of Ocalo (*op. cit.*, pp. 180-1). Mr. Henry confirms this, and in answer to our questions obtained the following account of the origin of the *ororo*. During the reign of king Ocalo there was trouble between the Nuer and Shilluk. The sons of Ocalo, who led the Shilluk against the Nuer, were all killed except Dowad, considered very insignificant by the king, who felt that there would be no chance of one of his offspring reigning since all his important sons had been killed. In a rage Ocalo took the sacred spears of Nyikang and threw them in the river, but Dowad succeeded in rescuing the last and demanded of his father why he did this. When Ocalo answered that his sons were dead, a quarrel ensued between father and son, leading Dowad to say that the sacrifices to his father should not be killed with a spear and to threaten to degrade his father's descendants. When Dowad became king his half-brothers were degraded to the level of commoners, with the name Nygiel instead of their previous appellation Kwareth. As compensation they were granted an important part in the installation and funerary rites of the king, as well as in certain religious ceremonies at Fashoda.

793

778 of the shrine attendants as well as the village beasts. The priestesses of these shrines are probably chosen entirely for their efficiency, and we had full opportunity to note the excellent manners and forcible character of our friend Aker.

793 778 614 831 The clans Golobogu and Pameiti are closely associated with the upkeep of the Fenikang shrine, indeed the Golobogu clan, and probably to a lesser extent the Pameiti, act as caretakers of the shrine and when sexually pure can enter it freely. Children of these clans before the age of puberty and men in a state of chastity may enter the shrine, but if a man should do so after sleeping with a woman he would die. A married man whose wife is pregnant will in all probability be living chastely, and such men were seen entering the shrine without comment being made by the villagers. The chief [613] (*jago*) of the local group of clan Golobogu always kills any beast that may be sacrificed at the shrine. Aker said that this man, one Ayurial, had instructed her in her duties as priestess of the shrine; it was, however, evident that Aker was of more importance than Ayurial, [156] though how much this may have been due to force of character could not be determined.

778 346 The different functions of the huts constituting the shrine further indicate that the pattern of the original shrine was a homestead and that the shrine itself is the homestead of Nyakang. The information we give concerning the huts composing the shrine—each having its own name—is in part the result of our inquiries at Fenikang in part additional information provided by Mr. Heasty.

The names of the huts are: Nyikayo, Kwayo or Duwad, Wed Mac, Dag or Kwayo,[1] Duwol.

Nyikayo was the hut in which lived the mother of Nyakang; here millet was said to be stored.

● [613 192] Duwad was the name of the hut in Nyakang's homestead in which Nyakang used to sleep; whence the name Kwayo, the word used of royalty for "sleep" (other folk *nin*). This is the most sacred hut of the shrine, shown on Pl. VIII with the horns of sacrificed beasts in the ground before its door. In it are kept the former possessions of Nyakang, his stool—alleged to be of metal with "eyes", i.e. probably having its seat spotted as a leopard-skin—his drum, and his lyre (*thom*) said to have a metal body. Beside these are eight

---

[1] The reason for two of the huts having the same name is that, as will be seen immediately, both were sleeping places. Alternate names at Fenikang for Nyikayo and Wed Mac were Nagojo and Kajo respectively.

778 346 gourds, seven articles described as plates—white and red, two very large—seven similar but smaller articles, copper cooking vessels, many Shilluk clay pots, and four elephant tusks; sacred water is also kept here. [776] This is the hut which Nyakang himself is thought to visit at night, arriving as a wind; music heard coming from the hut as he plays his lyre (*thom*) is taken as evidence of his presence, and the feeling that he still protects his people is vastly strengthened by these visits. This hut was said to be built by the chief of the Nyelwal sub-district in which is Fenikang.

Wed Mac contains the cooking pots of Nyakang, and here fire is made and food cooked.

Dag, or Kwayo, represents the hut in which Dag slept.

Duwol—also called Nyakang—was the hut before which Nyakang [692] heard disputes, and the *reth* still sits in front of it and hears cases when he visits Fenikang. Mr. Heasty was told that the small children of the village might sleep in this hut when mosquitoes were bad, and at Fenikang it was said that four tusks were kept here.

The *ludi* is stated to be a place for the king, where he may urinate and perhaps bathe.

782 776 The worship of Nyakang at Fenikang and his other shrines consists of a solemn ritual of sacrifice and prayer. We know of the following occasions for ceremonial worship; no doubt there are others of which we did not hear, and we do not doubt that sacrifice would be made in any threat of national danger or disaster. We give in brief outline accounts of the two most important annual ceremonies:—

[805] 1. The rain-making ceremony held before the rains at the beginning of the month *alabor*, at the new moon (the Shilluk calendar is lunar).

2. The harvest festival held when the millet is cut, i.e. about the end of the rains.

At the rain ceremony a cow and a bullock are given to Nyakang, the latter being killed and the former added to the herd belonging [243] to the shrine. Both should be given by the king, who at the Fashoda shrine himself takes part in the ceremony. The bullock is slain with a sacred spear by one of the *bareth* before the door of the shrine enclosure, while the king stands near the beast praying loudly to Nyakang for rain and holding a spear pointing upwards. After the meat has been eaten by all the *bareth*, the bones and as much blood as can be collected in a gourd are thrown into the river, and the skin is made into a mat for Nyakang. Much of the millet preserved in

782
796 the shrine since the beginning of the last harvest is made into beer for this occasion. Our Fenikang informants told us that the king should [643] himself come to their village for this rite, and the above short description is mainly from notes made at Fenikang. But, whatever the theory, the usual practice at the present day is for the king to send the animals given to Nyakang to the shrines, and for the *bareth* to pray for rain as they are sacrificed.

[115] We are indebted to Yangjok, one of the most important of the Shilluk chiefs, for the following account of the rain ceremony as it is held at Acop, where stands one of the *kengo Nyakang*. A bullock, or bull, and a hen are killed before the [773] shrine of Nyakang, each animal being killed by one of the *bareth Nyakang*. Before the ceremony the ground within the shrine enclosure and that outside the fence is swept clean by a number of old women. Drums are placed in the open space near the centre of the village and men and women dance vigorously, first holding spears and other weapons, then raising their hands, singing and praising Nyakang. If there is a tree in the open space the sacrificial bullock is tied to it. At the end of the dance the chief of the district pours water, recently brought from the river, into the hollow of his hand, spits into it, and sprinkles the bullock with this. The bullock is [787] speared high up in the flank, so that the wound is not immediately fatal, and is allowed to go free. If he wanders towards the river it is a good sign, and if he falls on his left side, or goes towards the shrine of Nyakang, it is good, but if he falls on his right side it is bad; in theory the bullock should go to the river and come back to die where he was speared, and it seemed that in practice little difficulty was experienced by the practised Shilluk herdsmen in guiding the victim in the right direction. The beast is skinned and cut up where it [831] falls, and the flesh is boiled and eaten by all except pregnant women and their husbands and men and women who have had intercourse during the previous night. Care is taken not to break the bones, which with all fragments are thrown into the river. The head, one forelimb, and the bowels compose the share of the attendants of the shrine, who cook and eat their portions with the rest of the community. The skin is prepared and used as a mat in the hut of Nyakang, where the sacred spear is kept with which the sacrificial animals are killed.

At the harvest festival it is usual to bring ears of ripening millet and to thrust them into the thatch of certain of the huts constituting

782 the shrine. When the millet is cut everyone brings a portion to the
bareth Nyakang. This is ground and made into porridge with water
796 brought from the river; some is poured out at the threshold of the
hut regarded as specially sacred to Nyakang, and some on the ground
within the hut, the outside of which is also anointed with the mixture.
Until this has been done no one may eat of the new crop.

●643 There is a ceremony at the accession of each king, when the newly
consecrated ruler should send cattle to each shrine of Nyakang, and
782 also presents of spears and other valuable objects, such as ostrich eggs
and elephant tusks. Some of the beasts are sacrificed outside the
enclosure, others are added to the herd belonging to the shrine.
We have no information concerning the details of this ceremony,
but we do not doubt that the flesh of the slaughtered beasts is eaten
by the *bareth*.

755 When a man is sick he may bring or send a sheep to the nearest
shrine of Nyakang, where the attendants sprinkle it with water and
782 spear it. They pray for the sick man, who eats a part of the flesh
of the sheep or drinks some of the water in which the meat has been
boiled. The rest of the sheep is eaten by the guardians of the shrine
and their friends without any ceremony, but the bones and perhaps
the intestines are thrown into the river.

782 We add an account of a ceremony that took place on 9th December,
1910, at which we were present, premising that our notes were made
796 after, not during, the ceremony and are certainly incomplete:—

[178] When we reached Fenikang at the end of November, 1910, the
shrine of Nyakang was being prepared for a ceremony, having for
its object the saving of the millet from attacks by flocks of innumerable
small birds. A band of women, perhaps as many as forty, had started
to clear the area round the shrine, pulling up every weed and blade
of grass. Often they would sing, keeping time by clapping their
hands; or they would get up and dance slowly round the outside
fence of the shrine, and then sitting down would chant another song,
occasionally breaking out into cries resembling the Arab *zagharit*.
[579] Some of the women were visitors to Fenikang; unfortunately we
did not discover whether they had come specially for this purpose,
or to which clans they belonged. For the next few days there were
always a few women at work weeding, plastering mud, painting the
walls, and generally tidying the shrine, or bringing in baskets of sand
from outside for the floor of the enclosure.

Although the time was undoubtedly due for the ceremony its

performance was delayed, the difficulty being the provision of a bull 782
for the sacrifice. It was the duty of the district chief, Dienjok of 796
the Golobogo clan, to provide the sacrifice, but as a certain man from [634]
the village of Buru owed him a bull he was endeavouring to obtain
this and to kill it for the ceremony instead of taking one from his own
herd. How long negotiations might have continued it is impossible
to say, for Dienjok though a chief, was old and feeble and seemed to 782
have little authority in his district. After about a fortnight we 793
announced our intention of leaving, but Aker begged us to remain, 796
and expressed great regret that we should go before the ceremony.
We naturally supposed this protest to be formal, and that the village
was merely waiting for us to leave in order to perform the sacrifice;
however we went with her to the village of Nyelwal where the chief
and his assistant and a few old men were assembled. Here Aker
harangued the men, frequently making marks on the ground and
breaking off pieces of grass and laying them down one by one by way
of emphasis and explanation. The conference lasted a long time and
she begged us to have patience, seeming certain that she must gain
her way. We cannot say how far she went into the matter of the [643]
debt from Buru, or if at any time she had any official voice in the
affair, but she undoubtedly had the authority of the king behind her
and she used it freely. Towards the end of the conference the men's
tones had changed completely. Aker announced to us that the
ceremony would take place the next day and that Dienjok would
provide the bull.

At dawn next morning the drums were beaten for about half an hour. At 8 a.m. there were no signs of festivity in the village, and women, including Aker's servants, were still at work on the shrine enclosure, smoothing and plastering and removing the smallest weeds. Yet by 2 p.m. probably more than 500 people had assembled and dancing had begun. In the centre of the open spaces to the west of the shrine a large and a small drum were being beaten, the dancers surging in spirals round and away from these. Numbers of older men and women were sitting near the huts on the edge of the dancing-ground, and hundreds of spears were tilted against the thatches, for though all the men came to the village carrying their spears no one held one during the ceremony except Aker, who carried in her left hand a narrow pointed spear, in her right a whip with a double lash, and wore round her head a fringe of black goat-hair. Her cloth was knotted over the left shoulder in correct masculine style. She

776 and habitat. The spirits of the bush are we believe in the main
unimportant, but the river people and their river cattle play a more
776 considerable part in the mythology of the people. One of the groups
773 of people whom Nyakang found in the land were fish-men, or rivermen with the power of turning into fish, while the mysterious cows
whose dung provided the "ashes of denying" (p. 102) had their
original home in the river.

643 It is convenient to consider the cult of the dead Shilluk kings apart
769 from that of Nyakang at his cenotaph shrines, but it must be
776 remembered that in every king there is immanent the spirit of
Nyakang, so that the worship rendered them at their grave shrines
is ultimately only part of the cult of Nyakang.

778 Like the cenotaph shrines of Nyakang the royal grave shrines are
764 called *kengo*, as opposed to the graves of commoners for which the
word is *roro*.[1] Though smaller, they resemble the shrines of Nyakang
643 in appearence, for the roofs of their constituent huts terminate in
[346] ostrich egg and spear-head. The guardians or priests (*bareth*) of
these shrines are of the same class as those of the *kengo Nyakang*,
[793] viz. elderly women, often widows of the dead king, and old men,
his former servants, or their descendants who have reached the
requisite age, or, as a last resource when none of these can be found,
old women or old men not specially connected with the dead king.
Just as no one except the *bareth Nyakang* is allowed to enter the
shrines of Nyakang, so no stranger may enter the royal grave shrines.
[644] A royal daughter never becomes a guardian of a shrine, but she may
enter the grave shrine of her dead father and rub her hands on its
floor for a blessing whenever she likes, as may the royal sisters.
It seemed that these privileges did not extend to the shrines of other
dead kings, nor even to the enclosed space around them. Should the
[787] spirit of a dead king appear to a royal daughter or sister in a dream
and demand an offering, she would take a sheep to the guardians of
the tomb and give it to one of them to sacrifice in the same way as
[782] a commoner. There are cattle belonging to the grave shrines of
the kings, and offerings are made as at the shrines of Nyakang. Thus,
when the millet crop threatens to fail, or epidemic sickness to attack
the cattle, Nyakang or one of his successors will appear to someone
in a dream and demand a sacrifice. This is told to the king, who will
immediately send a cow and a bullock to one or more of the shrines

---

[148
643] [1] So kings do not "die", but "go away", and in addressing the king a special court language is employed.

● 643
778 of Nyakang, if Nyakang has appeared, or to the grave shrine of the
764 appropriate king if the dreamer has seen one of the later Shilluk kings. The bullock is killed and the cow added to the herd belonging to the shrine.

It is usual for the harvest ceremony (already alluded to on p. 80) to be performed at the royal grave shrines as well as at the shrines of Nyakang, though it is recognized that this is not absolutely necessary. Again, each king soon after his installation sends or should send presents to the grave shrines of his predecessors, treating these in the same way as he treats the shrines of Nyakang, though the presents need not be so lavish. So, too, sick folk send animals to be sacrificed as offerings at the shrines of their kings, just as they do to the shrines of Nyakang.

771 At this point it will be convenient to anticipate the conclusions
643 to which the next few pages will lead, and point out that the actual working religion of the Shilluk is the cult of Nyakang, depending upon the acceptance of the following beliefs: (1) the immanence in each king (*reth*) of Nyakang, (2) the conviction that the king must not be allowed to become ill or senile, lest with his diminishing vigour the cattle should sicken and fail to bear their increase, the crops should wither in the fields, and men, stricken with disease, should die in ever increasing numbers. It follows that the *reth* of the Shilluk must be numbered among those rulers whom Sir James Frazer has called "divine kings", and though, as in many instances in other countries, every precaution is taken against accidental death, the Shilluk kings are (or were) killed in order to avoid those disasters which their senescence was thought to bring upon the state.

643 Although there is no doubt that the kings of the Shilluk were killed ceremonially when they began to show signs of old age or ill-health, it is extremely difficult to ascertain exactly what was done, and a good deal of Shilluk folklore is enshrined in the accounts commonly given of the killing of the *reth*. According to these, any royal son (*nyireth*) had the right to attempt to kill the king, and if successful to reign in his stead. The killing could only take place
[649] at night, for during the day the king would be surrounded by his friends and bodyguard and no aspiring successor would have the least chance of harming him. At night the king's position was very different; alone in his enclosure with his wives, and with no men to protect him except a few herdsmen whose huts were situated at a little distance, he was represented as passing the night in constant

watchfulness, prowling fully armed, peering into the shadows or 643
standing silent and watchful in some dark corner. Then, when at last his rival appeared, the fight would take place in grim silence, broken only by the clash of spear and shield, for it was said to be a point of honour for the *reth* not to call for help.

Though many commoners will give some such account there is [173]
no reason to suppose that the above represents what really happened during the recent period before the Mahdia. It is, however, probable that these tales reproduce with tolerable fidelity a state of affairs that once existed among the Shilluk. Two survivals of the conditions outlined may indeed persist: the sleepy condition of king Fadiet on the few occasions on which we saw him may really have been due, as was said, to his keeping awake at night and sleeping only by day, and the sham fights which take place during the complicated ceremonial of the consecration of a new king may represent former battles.

In recent times the leading part in the killing of the *reth* has been 643
assigned to the *ororo*, the descendants of the brothers of Ocalo the 565
fifth king of the Shilluk. It is generally believed among well-informed Shilluk that their sixth king, Dowad, was first killed [173]
ceremonially, but according to one account Tugo, the tenth king, was the first to suffer. Reliable information concerning the actual killing of the *reth* during recent times is not forthcoming. It is said that the *ororo* and some of the chiefs announce his fate to him, after which he is taken to a hut specially built for the occasion and strangled.
The reasons determining the *ororo* to act are said to be the ill-health [886]
of the *reth*, or his incapacity to satisfy his many wives, which is regarded as an undoubted sign of senescence. Concerning this [173]
there are two popularly received accounts. One states that his wives would themselves strangle the *reth*, but we believe this to be incorrect; the other is to the effect that the wives notify their husband's shortcomings to some of the chiefs, who tell them to indicate to the *reth* his approaching death. It is widely believed that this is done by spreading a piece of cloth over his face and over his knees as he lies sleeping during the afternoon.

Ignoring these discrepancies and recent practice, there is little doubt 173
that the old custom was to take the *reth* and one nubile maiden (or 643
possibly two) to a specially built hut, the opening of which was then walled up so that the inmates, left without water or food, died of starvation and suffocation. This practice was said to have been given up some five generations ago on account of the suffering of the *reth*,

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

173 643 who was so distressed by the stench from his companion's body that he shouted to the people outside the hut commanding them on no account to leave his successor to die slowly in such a manner.

643 For a long time no public announcement of the king's death is made, but the news spreads gradually.

766 We could not discover by whom and under what circumstances the king's body was brought to his birthplace, where he would be buried and his grave shrine erected. It must, however, be remembered that Fashoda has not always been the home of the king, for although it is uncertain how the change was brought about, there is no doubt that formerly each Shilluk king reigned and was buried in the village in which he was born and in which his afterbirth was buried. Some months after death, when decomposition was judged to have proceeded so far that little but the bones would be found, the hut was broken down by the *orors*, a grave was dug, and the bones of the king and of his companion were placed in it wrapped in the skin of one of the sacrificed oxen. A hut was built over the grave, and one or two others put up within the enclosure for the attendants on the new shrine which had thus arisen. Westermann states that this ceremony [772 778] was the public notification that the king had disappeared, and he describes the sacrifice of a man and woman by drowning; the victims were bound and placed in a canoe, which with many spears, bells, beads, and pottery vessels was rowed into the middle of the river and sunk.[1]

114 The following account of the election and consecration to the kingship of the chosen prince is a summary composed from the accounts given by Seligman, Munro, and Hofmayr.[2] It does not pretend to be exhaustive, and where apparent discrepancies occur in the sources we have generally made use of unpublished information collected in 1911, or incorporated the details we consider most likely to be accurate.

643 The interregnum after the king's death usually lasts about a year, a period of anxiety and uncertainty but which ceremonially should be long enough to permit of the sowing and considerable growth of the next season's millet crop, perhaps even of its harvesting. During

---

[1] Op. cit., [illegible].

[2] Seligman, "Cult of Nyakang and the Divine Kings of the Shilluk": *Fourth Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories*, vol. B, Khartoum, 1911; F. Munro, "Installation of the Ret. Chol (King of the Shilluks)": *S.N. & R.*, I, 1918, [illegible]; Hofmayr, op. cit., [illegible]. Munro was an eye-witness of the first part of the installation of the present king, Fafiti, on 17th January, 1918. Westermann has a text dealing with the installation of the king, but this is unusually short and incomplete.

this time no big dances or festivities should be held. Any small 643● matters arising are dealt with by the most important chiefs, but great affairs must stand over until the appointment of the new king. Meanwhile, the selection of the new king has been going forward; theoretically this is in the hands of the chiefs of the ten districts into [662] which the Shilluk territory is divided, but unofficially many give advice, and there is much intrigue. How far the choice is thought 643 to be inspired is uncertain, but certain portents might occur if the 787 wrong man were chosen, e.g. the effigy of Nyakang, to be described immediately, might become too heavy to be moved, while a method of selection has been described which may be regarded as indicating supernatural sanction. As many small stones as there are candidates are thrown into a fire, and each stone is given a name, the stone of the chosen candidate remaining after the others have burst out of the fire; or, according to another account, the kingship is determined by the colour the stones assume—red (for cattle) or white (for plentiful crops) or red and white. The decision is come to secretly. One 643 of the district chiefs then seeks the king-elect in his village by night 796 and bids him to single combat, really a sham fight; only when he has shown his mettle does the chief signify to him that he has been chosen as sovereign. The king-elect should remain in his village until all is ready for his installation.

Meanwhile messengers have been sent to Akurwa, near the northern limit of the Shilluk country, to bid the Akurwa people bring the sacred four-legged stool from the shrine of Nyakang in their village, and also the effigy called "Nyakang", which is kept wrapped in the common cotton cloth of the Sudan. The effigy, with that of his son Dag, and the sacred stool, are carried southwards towards Fashoda; each night the effigy is placed upon the stool, but by day the objects are borne upon men's shoulders, and as they march the men sing songs commemorating Nyakang and his deeds.[1] The party bearing the sacred objects may seize anything they like on the way, but it seems that their wants are so freely provided for in the villages they pass that they scarcely exercise their prerogative.

As the procession approaches Fashoda the king-elect, with the ororo, betakes himself to Debalo village, which he enters treading upon a leopard skin spread for that purpose, and goes directly to a hut

---

[1] Nyakang appears in a dream to one of the bareit of the Akurwa shrine and prescribes the songs to be sung; no doubt among these will be some of those recorded by Hofmayr, op. cit., 419, et seq.

● 643 796 specially built for him. Here he should stay for about a month (Papit, the present king, stayed only four nights), spending much time in communion with Nyakang, giving many presents though receiving few, and abundantly exercising his right of amnesty.

[372] A ceremonial fire is made by friction, *ororo* and *kwareth* working together, from which brands are taken—by the *ororo* to start a fire in front of the hut in which the king is staying, by the *kwareth* for a fire in the centre of the village, and by commoners for a fire in a millet field near the king's hut. The purpose of these fires—we quote verbatim from Mr. Heasty's letter—is "to keep anyone from taking the king's life before he is crowned". It is generally said that a brand from one of these fires is carried to Fashoda, but this is not so; Mr. Heasty discovered that the fire-sticks (one an old spear-handle) are carefully wrapped up and taken to Fashoda by the *ororo*, together with offerings of cattle. After the king has reached Fashoda all the fires in the village are put out; a cow is taken to the house of Nyakang as offering, together with the fire-sticks, and by means of the latter a new fire is kindled by the *ororo* and *kwareth*. [787] If this starts quickly it is a good omen and the king will live long; if the fire is long in kindling it is a sign that Nyakang is not well pleased with the new king and that his reign is likely to be short and troubled.

[402] The king-elect is escorted to Fashoda riding a black ox; on reaching the *khor* nearby he stops and awaits the arrival of the party from Akurwa, now swollen to a procession, who approach singing ancient sacred songs. From now on, until the entry to Fashoda, it becomes increasingly difficult to follow details of the ceremony. Mr. Munro's account is most valuable, and is printed as an Appendix, but he points out that the crowd was so dense that he could not see everything. Probably a black ox is sacrificed before the khor (about a quarter of a mile from Fashoda) is crossed, and it seems that there is something in the nature of a sham fight between the party surrounding the king-elect and the folk bringing the effigy of Nyakang from Akurwa. The khor is at last crossed, it being important that the king-elect should not wet his feet, and it appears that there is now a substantial fusion of the two parties—perhaps after a further scuffle. The king-elect, with "Nyakang" near to him, moves forward to Fashoda, and as he does so he treads successively on a sheep lying bound on the ground, on an ox, and in former days on an old man who had been caught by the *ororo* and kept bound and fasting for twenty-four

hours in the shrine of Nyakang; this old man was smeared with flour, and was so betrodden by the multitude that he usually succumbed.[1] Now, or perhaps at an earlier stage of the ceremony, a girl of about ten is presented to the king-elect by men of *kwa* Okal, a clan traditionally descended from the old inhabitants of the land who became the friends and dependents of Nyakang.[2] 643 796

At last the king-elect enters Fashoda, *ororo* on either side of him, and is taken to the shrine of Nyakang, in front of which, its legs held by the *orore*, is the sacred four-legged stool brought from Akurwa. Upon this is placed the effigy of Nyakang, presumably held in place by an *orore*; these sacred objects are shielded from the general view by a sheet of cotton cloth held in front and at the sides, the shrine forming a screen behind them. Within the enclosed area are certainly the king-elect, the *nya kwer*, and the man holding "Nyakang"; whether there are others is uncertain. According to one account the king-elect, wrapped in a cowhide, is laid on the ground on a leopard skin in front of Nyakang; he clasps a drum, and the whole assembly beseeches the spirit of Nyakang to protect and bless the new ruler. The *orore* crouch behind the king, while women, singing and dancing, encircle the recumbent group. Whether these details are accurate or not it is certain that after a short time the statue of Nyakang is withdrawn by the *orore* from the stool, on which the king now seats himself, remaining motionless in prayer and communion with his ancestors for perhaps a quarter of an hour. Meanwhile water is heated in the specially built temporary "homestead"—consisting we believe of three huts—into which the king will withdraw when he retires from the shrine of Nyakang, and certain of the king's wives wash his feet with hot and with cold water, in order that he may be neither too "cold" nor too "hot" with his people. A bull provided by the *kwa* Ajol has been led before the door of the king's special

---

[1] There is obviously more ceremonial in connection with this man than we have indicated, or else there were two human sacrifices, but details were not easy to elicit. Abor informed us that the victim would be lying unbound when the king stepped over him, touching him with his right foot as he did so, for if this were not done the country would sicken and fail. This took place near the shrine of Nyakang, apparently as the king approached the sacred stool; the "great ones"—including certainly the *jong dwong*—assembled near the shrine and each spat into a bowl of porridge, which was then eaten by the victim, who was left exposed, tied up—or perhaps pegged out—until dead, though it was not expected that he would die the same night. It was said that the victim was not selected from any special clan or place. [182]

[2] This girl, known as the *nya kwer*, attends the king-elect during the ceremonies of installation and later is given in marriage—he does not marry her himself—according to his wishes. *Kwa* Okal formerly received a large payment in spears and cattle for providing this girl. Whether she at one time was taken to wife by the king and in any way resembled the *dak bur* of the *Anuak* is a matter for future investigation. [649]

643 796 homestead, and is speared by an *orore* after the king has marked it with a spear, or perhaps made passes over it, the beast being dragged away to fall probably outside the shrine of Nyakang.

This brings the installation proper to an end, and the king, waited on by the *nyo kwer*, enters the homestead, where he should remain [775] some ten days in solemn communion with Nyakang whose spirit he now incarnates.

On the tenth night the king is taken by the *orore* to his rebuilt "palace" on the mound Aturwic, and lives there for a month in retirement. When he comes down from the mound there is again a sham fight, in which he vanquishes his opponent, and he is now the acknowledged king.[1] A beast is sacrificed, and the chiefs present make oration on the rights and duties of the ruler, each emphasizing his words by brandishing his spear and thrusting it into the ground at the close of his speech. The king replies, promises to be a just ruler, to punish wrong and to protect the weak, and dismisses his people after exhorting them to remain true to Nyakang and to their ancient customs.

The three newly built huts which were occupied by the king are broken down (perhaps by the *orore*) and their fragments thrown into the river.

We believe that the installation of a new *reth* generally takes place about the middle of the dry season. It was said that the Akurwa party and "Nyakang" stay at Fashoda for some time, until about the beginning of the rains. On leaving Fashoda a bullock is sacrificed, and a sheep is killed before crossing every khor on the way back. On arriving at Akurwa four or five of the cattle presented by the *reth* are sacrificed, and the bones thrown into the river.

771 The third element in the Shilluk religion is the cult of ancestors (other than those of the royal family). We confess that we feel unable to set this forth in due proportion and perspective. For [771] while it is certainly true to say that the ancestral cult is overshadowed by the cult of Nyakang, and that if it ever existed in any such form and degree as among the Dinka it is now but a remnant of what it [769] once was, yet we are convinced that there is very much more feeling for and fear of dead ancestors than appears on the surface. We have

---

[1] Fafiti, the present king, left his temporary homestead on the third night and came down from his palace on the mound the next morning. For a rather confused account of what happened then, given to Mr. Munro by an Egyptian officer—not apparently himself an eye-witness—see Mr. Munro's article (see Appendix) already quoted.

769
778
Mr. Heasty, whom we consulted, holds that there is little difference between the worship of ancestors, and that of former kings. A suppliant would visit a royal shrine if there happened to be one near, and might afterwards resort to the grave of an ancestor. If no royal shrine were near he would immediately resort to an ancestor shrine, brushing away sticks, dirt, etc., with his hands, and offer a prayer to the ancestor. When for sickness a sheep is offered at the grave of an ancestor, an ear is severed, indicating that the sheep belongs to that ancestor and is ever afterwards sacred. Such sacred animals are handed over to some aged attendant of the shrine; their milk is never mixed with the milk of other animals, but is kept for the small children and the very aged, who come to the attendant's house to drink. The animals are never sold, and for each as it gets old one of its offspring is substituted. Such prayer and sacrifice may be offered in any serious difficulty, in sickness, before a perilous journey, or when greatly perplexed in any matter.

782
Human sacrifice was always rare among the Shilluk, but it undoubtedly occurred. There is a legend, likely we think to be truthful, that the shrine at Fenikang was originally erected with human sacrifice, and the idea exists that each time this shrine is rebuilt someone will die. We have already referred to the ceremonial and fatal treading underfoot of an old man (p. 97), by the king-elect and the people, and to the ceremonial drowning of a man and woman (p. 92). But besides these ceremonies more or less secret sacrifices might take place as a last resort to obtain rain—the usual prayers and offerings having failed—and for success in war. According to Hofmayr, who gives texts with literal translations,

782
769
[illegible]
[illegible]

---

deceased, the right ear is cut from the sheep, and tied to the ankle of the person making the offering, and the wounded ear is washed in a gourd of water . . . and then the water is poured on the grave, and part of it is thrown in the eye of the son. . . . It is for God . . . . The prayer is offered before the ear is cut off. If the son offers, prayer is made to God and the deceased, and then the sheep is killed as soon as . . . [the sheep urinates]. The sheep is cut open, and the contents of the stomach and bowels are thrown on the house of the sufferer, and then the meat is cooked. The meat cannot be eaten until the oldest living wife of the deceased takes some of the soup in a small gourd, which is covered with a small native mat, and pours it on the grave. . . .

"While there is no set form for the prayer . . . yet they are all very similar, and the following is an example :—

[SM]

"We praise you, you, who are God, it was you, who gave me my father, who begot me. I pray to you and my father. Why did you go to the earth and keep silence? Was not this your house before? When evil comes to your house, why do you not pray to God? Your house is given as a plaything to the people. You went to the presence of God, and we thought that nothing evil would befall us again, after you left. Now help, God. Why do you leave the responsibility of saving us God alone? God's spirit becomes tired (from work), and he leaves people and they die. Why do you not see and save us? You went to the ground, and you have forgotten that a person from another house does not guard yours." (Op. cit., 284-5.)

782

the king would generally be privy to the matter—always, it may be 789
presumed, where rain was concerned—the actual killing being done 643 ●
by an *ajuago*; special virtue resides in the testes, and these, perhaps [826]
with other parts of the body, were buried in the track to water, i.e.
to the river.[1] The procedure was the same, whether for rain or war.

The "medicine-men" of the Shilluk are of two kinds, the *ajuago* 754
—literally "the man of Juok" (God)—the good medicine-man, 756
who generally speaking works for the good of the community (though from the administrative standpoint his acts may be reprehensible), including the cure of the sick, and the evil medicine-man, the *jalyat*—literally "the man of herbs"—dealing essentially in black magic, or the satisfaction of private rather than public ends.

Typically, though not always, the *jalyat* is a monorchid, though 754
men with double undescended testes or even unusually small glands [826]
tend to be regarded as such. The malignity attending this condition [847]
is so fully recognized that all such should be killed at birth; this can only be done by drowning, the victim being enclosed within a specially woven basket without which—such is its power—the infant would surely survive. A common practice of the *jalyat* is to work on parts of the body (hair, excreta, etc.) of the person to be injured, and the process is extended to include objects associated with the individual, e.g. a petticoat, or even a weapon (especially a club); or an effigy may be made, and heated or pierced to destroy the person it represents.

Certain women known as *daiyat*—recognized by their actions, especially do they speak enviously of others—are regarded as the feminine equivalent of the *jalyat*. The magic of the *daiyat* is associated [826]
with her belly; one mode of working evil is to urinate into a gourd and place this in the house of her victim. A *daiyat* has no difficulty in getting married, nor does she bring misfortune on her husband.

We are in doubt as to how far the evil eye (*yuop*) is associated with the *jalyat*, though it is certain that not all having the evil eye are monorchids or even of the male sex. The power of the evil eye
—largely, though not necessarily, hereditary—is perhaps the other 755
most common cause of illness and is met by sympathetic magic:—

> "When a medicine man undertakes to cure a case of the evil eye, he aims to . . . cure the person suffering, and . . . to put that particular charmer . . . out of business. A sheep is brought, and the medicine man heats a nail red-hot. With the nail he blinds the sheep. He then tells the patient that he

[1] Op. cit., 134-6.

756 waning, but when it was suggested that perhaps an *ajwogo* might then have connection this was strenuously denied.

753 Perhaps the commonest cause of sickness was the entrance into a person of the spirit of one of the divine kings, a cure being effected when the spirit could be persuaded to leave its involuntary host.
● [643] We believe that only the early kings were thought to produce illness in this manner, and certainly the three or four cases into which we inquired were all said to be possessed by Dag. One of these cases,
[751] a woman who recovered after two sheep had been sacrificed to Dag, wore bead anklets, and amidst the beads there were threaded small pieces of the conchae of the ears of the goats. These anklets were considered protective against future possession by Dag.

695 Oaths are sworn by Nyakang, or on one of the holy spears from the shrine of Nyakang. Westermann notes that the latter form is used only in judicial procedure: a sheep is killed, and both parties are smeared with its blood, after which they swear by the spear, perjury being followed by death. In swearing by Nyakang his name is often coupled with that of one of the villages in which he has a shrine, e.g. a man may swear by Nyakang of Akurwa. The early kings may also be invoked by name, especially Dag.[1]

695
773 Reference has been made to the cattle belonging to Nyakang and kept at his shrines. In common parlance these are "cows of Nyakang", but besides these there was a mythical herd of mysterious cows from the river also known as the "cows of Nyakang", and from their dung were obtained the "ashes of denying", described by Westermann as follows:—

> "Once Nyikang caught a cow in the river. . . . It had no ears or horns. This cow was the beginning of a sacred herd. . . . They live in the river and come out to feed at night. . . . some say the Dervishes took them, while others affirm that it was the Turks. . . . The ashes were made by burning the dung of the sacred cattle. They are preserved at Wau and other villages dedicated to Nyikang, and are applied in . . . cases of adultery. . . . When the woman has confessed, but the man denies, they take recourse to the 'ashes of denying'. An old chief, taking a spear in his hand, stands erect, and offers the following prayer: 'You Nyikang, the ashes are yours! If this man has not had intercourse with this woman may he escape! But if he has had intercourse with this woman, may he die! If this woman accuses falsely may he escape!' After this the chief takes some of the ashes on his hand and strikes the man with it. Then the one who has sworn falsely, will die."[2]

---

[1] Op. cit., xliii.

[2] Op. cit., xliv.

221 weighty ceremonies, in order to keep the crocodiles away; this forms an im-
233 portant part of the duties of the witch-doctor; vide page 172. All the youths and
boys over ten years accompany the herds, leaving their homes for several weeks
or even months, and enjoying the free life in temporary huts. When after the
578 first rains the new grass springs up, they return home. The struggle for the
best pasture grounds very often becomes the cause of bitter quarrels, and has
in the past not unfrequently led to tribal wars.

231 GOATS The Shilluk goats have rather high legs, they almost invariably look thin
and not well fed; their colour is mostly grey, but black ones too are not un-
SHEEP frequent. The sheep have no wool, but hair. They have a kind of mane on
shoulder, neck and breast, the rest of the body being covered with short hair.
FOWLS Most sheep are white, brown-white, or black-white. — A race of small fowls
is kept, but the natives do not make much of them; many chickens are stolen
DOGS by snakes and other small animals. — Dogs are very numerous, they are a
kind of greyhound, of red or yellow colour, and have a black, long snout. They
are exceedingly quick in running and most clever in jumping. They overtake
gazelles with easiness, and are much used in hunting.

224 HUNTING Hunting is practised by all men occasionally, but is, as a rule, not very
[411] successful. They use spears, clubs, and traps in killing or catching animals.
Sometimes, chiefly in procuring animals whose skins form part of the revenue
of the king, all the people of a village assemble for a hunting match, vide page 105;
a large circle is formed, and the animals inside it, when wishing to escape, are
killed. When an animal is wounded, but runs away, they will persecute it for
● [643] days, till it breaks down. The skin of a killed leopard belongs to the king,
and could, at least formerly, be worn by privates only by special permission
of the king. A lion's skin is considered as evil, and is not worn.

225 Hippopotamus hunting is done by combined parties in canoes, harpooning
the animal and dispatching him with spears, when he comes to the surface
to breathe.

226 FISHING Their way of fishing is that with the round barbed spear, and with traps,
which are made of corn stalks and reed. Fish-spearing is done in muddy water,
where they cannot see anything below the surface, and therefore cannot aim.
But nevertheless by this rude mode they sometimes have good results, the fish
in the White Nile and Sobat being numerous and large. Sometimes they carry
on fishing during the night time by holding burning grass-torches over the
[177] water, and thus enticing the fish, which are then speared. In recent time nets
and fishhooks are bought from the white people, and are employed in fishing.

463 HANDICRAFTS The Shilluks practice a great number of crafts, which are carried on in families
for generations, the father and mother imparting their skill to their children.

773 others one against the sun and his son; vide page 159.

When he felt his end approaching, he assembled all the chiefs of his kingdom for a splendid festival. While all were merry, suddenly a great wind arose, and scattered all those present. In this moment Nyikang took a cloth, wound it tightly round his neck, and thus choked himself.[1]

773 775 But many Shilluks firmly believe that Nyikang is still alive. The Rev. Oyler writes to me: "When I asked how Nyikang died, they were filled with amazement at my ignorance and stoutly maintained that he never died. If he dies, all the Shilluks will die. He, *Dak*, and five other kings ascended to heaven, where Nyikang prays for the Shilluks (!). They say that he disappeared as the wind".

776 HOW NYIKANG IS ADORED. Nyikang is the ancestor of the Shilluk nation and the founder of the Shilluk dynasty. He is worshipped, sacrifices and prayers are offered to him; he may be said to be lifted to the rank of a demi-god, though they never forget that he has been a real man. He is expressly designated as "little" in comparison with God.

346 778 [532] In almost every village there is a little hut dedicated to Nyikang, or to some other ancient king. In form it is like the common houses, but much smaller and more slender. On its walls sometimes rough drawings in white, red, and black colour are seen, consisting simply in line-ornaments or representing animals. These drawings are made by women, with white, red and black earth, and are renewed every year before the chief prayers are offered. These huts are commonly called *kot rɛ̄* "place of the king" i. e. of Nyikang. Besides these small huts they have a number of greater temples, which are in form like the Shilluk-hut, but of much larger size. They are found in most of the villages devoted to Nyikang. These "sacred villages" are, *Akurwa*, *Wau*,[2] *Fenyikang*, *Nyibodo* (*Nyibɔdɔ*), *Otigo*, *Nyalwal*, *Oshing*, *Otego*, *Didigo*. These houses, the small as well as the larger, are the places where Nyikang is worshipped. In them, at least in some, a number of reliques are preserved, which are considered holy and are held in great veneration. Among these are a statue of Nyikang made [782] of ambach-wood; the holy spear, drum, and shield of Nyikang, a digging stick, ancient metal ornaments and clothes, etc. Spoils from wars are also dedicated to Nyikang, and are preserved in the temples.

776 786 [787] In times of need, when sickness or war are threatening, but above all when rain does not come in due time, the people assemble round the house of Nyikang and pray to him. This is done by dancing and at the same time singing prayers. At the beginning of the rainy season, when they are about to plant dura, the regular chief prayers take place; on this occasion an animal is slain as a sacrifice to Nyikang. Before the transaction of any serious business the elders of the village assemble around the temple of Nyikang, to ask for his counsel.

---

[643]

[1] Till the subjugation of the Shilluks by the British all succeeding Shilluk kings have finished their lives by the same form of death.

[2] This Wau is not the place in the Bahr Ghasal Province, but is situated on the left bank of the White Nile between Taufikia and Kodok.

SWEARING OATHS BY NYIKANG 645

By Nyikang also oaths are sworn. The expressions mostly used in swearing an oath are: *Nikaṅ abyɛ!* i. e.: "Nyikang indeed", "by Nyikang!" *Nikaṅ anan!* i. e. "Nyikang here!" or: "Nyikang now!" Another form is to couple his name with any of the sacred villages, as *Nikaṅ a Wau!* i. e. "by Nyikang of Wau!" Likewise *Nikaṅ a Nikan*, etc. In their conversations they are constantly using these oaths; they often make promises under oath, which they, however, readily break without any fear of penalty. They swear also by Dak, or any other of the ancient kings.

Another mode of swearing, which is used in judicial cases only, is to swear by the holy spear (of Nyikang): the ajwogo who keeps the spear, sacrifices a sheep and puts the blood upon the accused and the accuser, and offers a prayer that justice may follow. Now the accuser or the accused or both swear by the holy spear. If a person perjures himself, death is sure to follow as penalty.

HOW NYIKANG APPEARS 778 [776]

Nyikang at times appears in the forms of certain animals, as hippopotamus, ram, snakes, lizards, or in birds. The tree on which such a bird alights, is considered holy, and is henceforth dedicated to Nyikang; beads and pieces of cloth are suspended on its branches, sacrifices and prayers are offered below it. When once the Turks felled such a tree without knowing its destination, terror fell on the by-standing Shilluks; they walked in procession round the tree, filled the air with lamentations, and killed an ox to propitiate their ancestor.

NYIKANG AND THE "PROPHETS" 776 782

643

[778]

Though Nyikang is considered inferior to *Jwok*, sometimes the names of both are called simultaneously in the same prayer. In some prayers the name of Dak, a son of Nyikang, is also invoked beside that of Nyikang; but this is not frequent. It seems, however, that in some measure the direct descendants of Nyikang, or rather the ancient kings of the Shilluks, enjoy some kind of veneration, though perhaps this may not be called religious. They sometimes talk about the *rôr*, which is the plural of *ret* king, and has in this connection the meaning of "Prophets", or one analogous to that of the "*Judges*" of the ancient Hebrews. In several villages there are huts, like those of Nyikang, dedicated to one of these ancient kings or "*rôr*".

JWOK AND NYIKANG 776

In the political, religious and personal life Nyikang takes a far more important place than *Jwok*. Nyikang is the national hero, on whom each Shilluk feels proud, who is praised in innumerable popular songs and sayings; he is not only a superior being, but also a man. He is the sublime model for every true Shilluk; everything they value most in their national and private life, has its origin in him: their kingdom and their fighting as well as cattle-breeding and farming. While Nyikang is their good father, who only does them good, *Jwok* is the great, uncontrollable power, which is to be propitiated, in order to avoid his inflictions of evil.

773 **THE COWS OF NYIKANG** The natives frequently speak of the "cows of Nyikang". This expression is used in two different meanings, one mythological and one real.

Once Nyikang caught a cow in the river in a fish-net. It had no ears or horns. This cow was the beginning of a sacred herd; if anyone touched them who was not of their attendants, he died. They live in the river and come out to feed at night. This herd was carried away; some say the Dervishes took them, while others affirm that it was the Turks. From the dung of this herd the "ashes of denying" were gained. The ashes were made by burning the dung of the sacred cattle. They are preserved at Wau and other villages dedicated to Nyikang, and are applied in ordeals, when cases of adultery are to be tried. When the woman has confessed, but the man denies, they take recourse to the "ashes of denying". An old chief, taking a spear in his hand, stands erect and offers the following prayer: "You Nyikang, the ashes are yours! If this man has not had intercourse with this woman, may he escape! But if he has had intercourse with the woman, may he die! If this woman accuses falsely, may she escape!" After this the chief takes some of the ashes on his hand and strikes the man with it. Then the one who has sworn falsely, will die.

778
695

● 693
782
792

The other application of the term is to cows devoted to Nyikang by the king. Each year the king gives a steer and a cow to the villages in which the cows of Nyikang are kept. The male is killed and used for food. If any person not belonging to the attending herdsmen, eats of the meat of these animals, he becomes a servant of Nyikang, and must take up his residence in that village. The female is kept for breeding purposes. The *Kwa Obogo* (vide page 130) herd these cattle. The chief of these villages of Nyikang seems to be Wau. If an outsider tried to milk one of these cows, he would die.

756 **SORCERY** The third factor in the religion of the Shilluks is the *ajwogo*, and what is connected with him; *ajwogo* is the witch doctor or sorcerer; the word is probably derived from *jwok* "God", and would then mean: "one who is dependent on God", or "who has to do with God". As his most prominent business is to procure rain, Europeans generally call him rain-maker. He is the mediator between the people and Nyikang; he leads the dances and prayers to Nyikang, and presides at the sacrificial ceremonies. He heals also sicknesses by administering charms. Sick people apply to him with the present of a sheep or goat, or even an ox; the animal is killed, and the contents of its stomach are laid on the sick person's body; or the skin of the animal is cut into strips and these are fastened below the knee of the patient. This is also applied as a protection against dangers on a journey. When in the dry season the cattle are brought across the river, the sorcerer has to prepare charms to protect them from being seized by crocodiles. Besides this he is able to perform miracles, to kill

791
793

177
771
797
[648]

by side with Arabs and other Mohammedan people, should have preserved their own heathen form of worship, and should, with a few exceptions, look down rather with contempt on the religion of the foreigners. Partly this is explained by their conservativeness and self-confidence, and partly by the fact that their intercourse with Mohammedans was almost exclusively hostile. Whether now that the Pax Britannica makes slave-dealing and raiding impossible and new ideas slowly penetrate the country, Islam will make greater progress, the future will show. A gradual peaceful conquest of the country by Islam is not improbable, because civilization, as it comes to these people, wears an outspoken islamic stamp.

On Christian Mission work among the Shilluks vide the end of Introduction.

V. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.

643
[771]
[649]

RESIDENCE OF THE KING

The Shilluks are the only people of the Sudan who have a Kingdom[1]. The king resides at Fashoda. His residence consists in a large number of huts for himself, his numerous wives and other members of his family and for guests. He possesses large herds of cattle, goats and sheep. When a person of some respect pays him a visit, the king presents him with an ox. — The royal robe consists in a leopard skin. They have also a coronation robe of leopard skin and ostrich feathers, which has been handed down from many generations. The present king has a gorgeous red robe presented by the governor, which he wears on occasions when he meets the higher English officials.

ELECTION

The kingdom of the Shilluks is hereditary in so far as the king must always be a member of the royal family, that is, of the descendants of Nyikang, and only a person whose father has been a king, may be elected. There are three houses of the royal family, and the king is elected from each of these royal branches in turn. If there are several brothers in the branch whose turn it is to have the kingship, upon the death of the king one of these brothers will be elected. But in case there is no vacancy during the life of these three brothers, then the sons of the eldest will be in line for the throne.

Fadyęt is the present king. He is of the house of Kwat Ker. When he dies, the kingship will pass to the house of *Yį*; at the death of the king from the house of *Yį* it will be the turn of the house of *Nejęk*. Thence it will return to the house of Kwat Ker, but not to a son of *Fadyęt*, but to one of the king's brothers. When it has gone around the circle again, it will be the turn of a son of *Fadyęt*. There seem to be two branches of each house, so that when a king dies, it will be the turn of his eldest son to become king, after five kings have reigned and died. There have been other royal houses, but they have lost their right to the throne. If all the sons of a king die, before it is the turn of one of them to become king, that family loses its royal prerogatives. A left-handed or otherwise deformed man cannot be crowned. When from such or a similar reason the son of a king fails to be crowned, his posterity loses the right to the throne. 643 ●

---

[1] "king" is in Shilluk *rę̄ţ* or *ryę̄ţ*; in older literature the word "bondo" is given as the Shilluk name for king. By Europeans the king is commonly called mek, which is a contraction of the Arab melik.

As a rule only a man can be king; though once a queen reigned, she apparently did not command a great authority, vide page 149; and it is characteristic that in the lists given by Banholzer and Dr. Giffen her name is not mentioned. [562]

The way in which the king is elected, vide page 122 ff. Of course frequently party intrigues are at work on these occasions, and it may have been not quite an uncommon occurrence that there were several candidates for the throne, supported by different factions; sometimes there were even two kings, residing in different places of the country. [662]

POWER OF THE KING

The power of the king was, previous to the British occupation, absolute; he disposed on life and death of his subjects. The subjects had to pay heavy taxes in cattle, dura, boats, skins for clothes, and under certain circumstances, in persons also. [65]

JURISDICTION

All judicial cases may be brought before the king, with whom lies the final decision. They have an unwritten code of law, providing fixed penalties and fines. Cattle thieves were formerly killed on the spot by the owner of the stolen property. If the thief escaped, but was located with the stolen thing, the owner demanded it. In case the thief refused to give it up and the owner was unable to get it by force, he then reported to his chief, and if he failed there, the matter went to the king, who punished the man perhaps by taking his property and some girls from his village for himself. 691 693 695

In the case of certain infractions of the law the convict became the slave of the king, and could no more return to his home. These slaves are known as *[illegible]* ("men of crime") or *[illegible]*. The king gives to such a man a wife. Their children are slaves at the royal court and are called *[illegible]*. To the male descendants of such the king gives wives, and the females are taken to be given to male members of the *[illegible]* class as wives. If the king does not have enough girls in the *[illegible]* class to supply all the young men with wives, he buys free girls for the purpose, their descendants become also slaves. 681 567 [649]

In some cases the criminal becomes the slave of a chief; these are also called *[illegible]*.

Murder cases were tried by a court of chiefs and the king. If the man was condemned, he was disgraced in many ways before the people. Sometimes he was led about the village with a cow-rope around his neck, and then executed by hanging. If a man was executed on account of a crime, his whole family 682 672

539^{B}

the women start to carry the valuable things away and hide them; the cattle 682
are driven into the Dinka-country. Now a company of warriors come, the "army of the king"; they rob the village, all the fowls are seized, and the dura 539^{B}
is carried away by them. When the "army of the king" turns back, they bring 693 ●
the cattle back from the Dinka-country. Two cows are loosened by the chief, and are given to the king. But the king is angry, he says: "Go, and pay 682
(greater) amends!" Then the people pay; one gives a cow, and another one 683
also gives a cow, till there are ten; then the cows are brought to one place. 696
Now an ambassador from the king comes, he comes to the chief, and asks: "How is the matter?" The chief answers: "The matter is settled." The cows are brought and shown to the ambassador for examination. And besides they give some sheep to the ambassador and to the other people of the king (who have come with him), to please them. The people of the king take them, saying: "The matter of the man is bad! (that is: the gifts are not sufficient)". Now another cow is killed (and given to the ambassadors of the king). After that the cows (the ten cows mentioned above) are brought, and the people of the king go to Fashoda (with the cows), together with the family of the murdered one. The family of the man who has been murdered, receive five cows. The king gives them five cows and an ox, as a mourning (a mourning-feast) for their dead relative.

19. Blood Revenge.

Jal mịkọ, jal Mwọmọ, jal moădĭjak, ka nẹkẹ yị rẹ̈ Yọ. Ka tyẹk gẹn ẹ ywọ̈k. Ka jị aị kal yị fätọ kwạm, ka gẹ aị moko, ka gẹ chẹk mọt, ka jị a kẹ̈yị pyar adĭ-kyẹl, ka mọko jẹ̈ọ, ka gẹ dwọl; ka gẹ rwọng dwọl, ka gẹ tyẹk; ka gẹ rwono tyẹk, ka bül kẹl wọk, ka jịọ kẹ̈l, ka nẹk, mọn gẹy bül; ka bül tịa wọt kị kọr, ka bül tịa wọt, ka jịọng kẹ̈l, ka nẹk; ka ywọgọ ywọk, ka pyar adị kyẹl kẹ̈l wọk, ka gẹ nẹk, (kẹn) jịọ a nẹkẹ yị rẹ̈. Kẹ̈ gwẹ anan, ka Chọl a bwọgọ kịna. 539^{B}

A certain man, a man of Mwọmọ, a very good man, was killed by king Yọ. 539^{B}
His relations mourned for him. — At that time people (Shilluks) used to run 628
away from the country of the whites (i. e. Arabs), these were caught by the relations of the dead one, they were all put into a house, and when they numbered sixty, then beer was brewed, and it was mixed with flour; when they had finished mixing it, they sifted it; when they had finished sifting it, a drum was brought out, and one man was brought, and was killed; he was the one for beating the drum. Early next morning the drum was put into the house; when they had put the drum into the house, again a man was brought out and killed; and he was mourned. Thus all the sixty men were brought out and killed, in the place of the one man who had been killed by the king. That was the reason why the Shilluks were much afraid.

IV. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.

23. The Election of a King.

[illegible]

* 539 *[illegible]*

[illegible]

* 539 ● 643 [563] When a king is to be elected, they bring the descendants of the Nubians,[1] and the sticks of the princes are broken. And some people go to the Nubian country, and bring some flint stones; they are put into the fire; then the fire is blown up; and a stick (of the princes) is thrown into it, into the fire; if the fire remains black, then that one (the prince or pretendent who threw his stick in) is not the king. Another stick is thrown in (by another prince); if the fire burns (flames up) a little, then this one is not the king. Again another stick is thrown in; if the fire burns a little high, that one is not the king. Another stick is thrown in; if the fire dies, that is not the king. Another one is thrown in, and if the fire burns with a big flame, and blazes up, then the people laugh: "This is the king (the prince who threw in this stick, he is to be king)."

> [Hofmeyr says concerning this: "According to an ancient use which existed before Nyikang's time, a number of little stones according to the number of princes which have been proposed for election are thrown into a fire. Each stone has its name; now the one whose stone remains in the fire without cracking becomes king. This test is repeated so long till only one single stone is left.]

After that the people come (from different villages); they sleep in the bush, the next morning they come near and enter the village. The people of the stones (those who brought the stones) come and turn to a certain village, and a cow is sacrificed; they go into the next village, and a cow is sacrificed (in each village which they pass, a cow is sacrificed). So they come to Fashoda. On arriving there, the great chief asks them: "Who has been elected by the first stone?" They answer: "This or that prince" (calling the name of the elected one). 539* 643

---

[1] The Shilluks say: "When Nyikang brought his people into the Shilluk country, he brought some Nubians with him; these Nubians live in several villages among the Shilluks up to this day; they are known by the Shilluks, but in their outward appearance they do not differ from the Shilluks." According to the report given above they seem to play or to have played rather an important rôle in the constitution of the Shilluk dynasty. It appears that the Shilluks have been in some political connection with the Nubians.

That is all, and then the chiefs are brought (are sent for); they all are brought, from Mwomo to Tonga (the chief from each district, from the extreme north [Mwomo] to the south end [Tonga] of the Shilluk country is sent for). And they all come, that is, all chiefs come, and they talk about the matter. Then the people go to the village (of the newly elected king), they surround his village all around; after that they pass the night in the bush. Early next morning they go into the village again. Their spears are taken from their hands. They go into the enclosure (where the new king lives). The women cry. The king remains in the hut. The chiefs, the descendants of the kings, are called, they too go into the enclosure. The door-stick (of the hut) is cut off with a spear. They rush into the hut, and take the prince (the new king) out. He gives them a cow, the cow is killed by the chiefs, and they eat the meat. Then they take the new king to [illegible], and they adorn him with beads, with dancing beads of the king. And they hold a long palaver. 539* 634 643

16. A second report on the Election of a King.

[illegible] 539*

*539 *[illegible] Ka e kiiŋ biya: Shilli, [illegible] yan biya! fä fä [illegible] kwa! [illegible] bi [illegible] bi [illegible]. Ka [illegible] biya. Ka [illegible], [illegible]. Ka [illegible] Nikaŋ. Ka [illegible], ka e [illegible]. Ka [illegible], [illegible]. Ka [illegible] e [illegible] bi [illegible]. Ka [illegible] e [illegible], [illegible] fiip [illegible] fiip [illegible]*

*539 613 The chiefs are sent for; and the people (together with the chiefs) come, they assemble and talk about the matter. And the king is seized, and brought (back) into his own village. He is brought to a large place, and there he is (publicly) elected outside the courtyards. They assemble in the court of Nyikang, the large court; and the people pray, they pray to God, and they pray to Nyikang too; during this time the king is held fast. When this (praying) is finished, water is sprinkled on his body by all people; he is brought into a yard and is washed by the wives of the king. After that his body is covered with clothes, with royal clothes, and a royal spear is given to him; then he goes up to his royal hut, he goes up into it, and stays there one year.[1] When the year is passed, the people (the chiefs) gather, and the people of Nyikang are sent for. [778] They are brought from Akurwar, the village of Nyikang. They come and bring (the wooden statues of) Nyikang and (of) Dak, they are beautifully adorned, many ostrich feathers are tied to them. When they are brought, the people say: "Nyikang has come!" Now cattle is brought, and a man is caught, they bring him, strip his clothes off him, and bind him. He is laid on the ground in the midst of the road. And all, all the people come, the king in their midst, and the people pass over the back of this man, they step over him. When that is done, the people of Nyikang come, and bring a whip, and the people run away; – the king catches hold[3] of a girl — they run[2] away because of the

173 614 615 [According to Hofmeyer (Anthropos V, page 333) this girl is always taken from the clan of the Kwa-chål: "The Kwa-chål come from the Bahr el Ghazal; their ancestor was a relative of Nyikang; but a crime committed by one among them against the house of Nyikang, reduced the clan. They were declassed to ordinary Shilluks, and as a punishment for their crime they were sentenced to pay a girl to the king. This contribution has to be delivered whenever a new king is elected, but in course of time it has become an honour and a profitable business . . . This girl always stands at the king's side during the ceremonies of election. For this tribute the clan receives clothes, beads, bells, lances, and harpoons. A hole in the ground near Fashoda is filled with sheep; besides cows and oxen are driven into it, as many as may find place; these also belong to the relatives of the girl. This girl is now called nya kwer (i. e. child belonging to the authority. W.).

---

[1] or: "one day"?
[2] or: "to hold fast by"?
[3] vide page 128, 2 a.

> There are several other clans which have the privilege of performing certain ceremonies in connection with the election of a king. One has the duty of fanning the king with a feather of the king of birds, another has to secure the dura sticks with which the party of the king defeats the party of the enemies.*] 614 643 ●

people of Nyikang, but they be beaten by the people of Nyikang; for they (the latter) beat all people, and every one who is beaten, is put into a separate place and has to pay a fine to the people of Nyikang. All the people try to run into a house. 539* 643

Now a cow is brought, the cow is speared, and the king is brought out. All the people come, all the chiefs, and they place the king outside the door of the great court; the people pray. The king is given these commandments: "Do not do any wicked things! Do not kill people! Govern the country of the chiefs in peace!" And the king rises, and all the people go down, they kneel on the earth, but the wives of the king kneel beside him. And he says: "Ye Shilluk people all, look at me! This is the country of my father and my grandfathers; you will live a peaceful life through me!" And all the people say: "Our father, our father!" A cow is brought, and is speared on account of the prosperity (for the good speed) of the king. And cattle are brought, and given to the people of Nyikang. And the man (who was bound) is released, and goes home. Another cow is speared, which finishes the matter. And the king is covered with certain clothes, big clothes, royal clothes. Now the people scatter, each one goes to his own country.

27. How Clothes are secured for the Royal Court.

Ka ġwą kĕ bį dwör bį ląi, ląi kwör, gyęk. Ka ġwą e kędą bįwą, gį gör, ka jäk e lämį: yįna yįk ġįng, kwöbö gąk dnän, ląi tygk, ląi kwor chį, y do tśń y twnyo, y chudų chį. E lämį: yįna yįk Nikąng, kyą an pęyą gį, wą bį ġįp bį kwąyp! E ko: ą, kwąyo ġįng, ngä ląi bį dįch, y kur kyą ó gįn; ngkö dįch, kįji-dį-bäng! Ka dyąl kąl, ka chwąyp, ka gyįng kąl, ka ńąl, ka dwor e kędą, ka tüń dwor kąl, ka gyąk ngk gę gör, ka ġwą bįwą, ka jäk e chądą, ka ląi työr, ka gę rüng työrą, ka jäke dwąn, ka ląi gįchä, ka e ko: jäyį, kąl mąk, ka e ko jäk dwą: kąl mąk, ńäń. Ka gę ńań. Ka gę rwąng ńäng, ka gę kąl, kąy bę tywro; ka jäkę ko kęna: ą? E ko: ą, dę wo bä kędą gįn? Ka e kąyę ġwąń, ka ġwąń kąl, ka jäk chąn, ka gę kędą ka Buchödą. Ka rįį ńągh, ka ko: jäk á bi. Kįna: wno, wą bi! Wo kąlį ńą? Wę kąlį jwnd kwor. Kįna: gį ńäi? Kįna györ ańikyąl. E kę: dįch! Ka rįį e kang wąp (rwąng) dwąn, ka ngkö jäk, ka ngk. Ka jäk e rįjį, gį chämą bį ġwąń. Ka gę ńąchį. Kįna: wno, bä wkįį? Kįna: ą, mįįi jwąk! Ka jäk e bįdą, ka mągłä tyąn, ka gę rįjį, gį mądo. 539*

*539 *Kine: [illegible] Ko gẹ [illegible]. Ko gẹ [illegible] Ko gẹ [illegible]*

*539 The people go hunting game, a game for the king, a gyęk-antelope. And all the people go, they are many, and the chiefs address them: "O ye people,
229 (hear) a commandment of the king, concerning the gyęk-antelope, which belongs
●643 to the king: if any man let the game escape, he shall surely be fined!" Then
651 they pray: "O Nyikang, this matter is under your auspices! Do not suffer us to have any mishap! You grandfather of man, kill the game well, so that we may incur no debts! May it be killed well, o Nyikang!" Then a goat is brought, it is speared; a fowl is brought and cut up. Now the hunting-party arises, each part (goes) in a different direction. And when many antelopes have been killed, the people come back, and the chiefs assemble, and the game is brought before them; when they have brought it all, the big (district-) chief divides the animals, and says: "This chief shall take this, and this one shall take that;" then he says: "Tan it!" And they tan it. When they have finished tanning, the skins are brought before the chief for examination. The chief (when he has examined them) says: "All right!" Again he says: "Shall we not bring them (to the king)?" He seizes a cow, which they take with them (to Fashoda); all the chiefs assemble, and go to Fashoda. When they arrive there, they ask for permission to enter (the royal court). It is said to the king: "The chiefs have come." They greet the king: "Our Lord, we have come." He asks: "What do you bring?" They answer: "We have brought royal goods." The king asks: "How many?" They reply: "Sixty." He answers: "Very well." Then the king brings a big
[576] steer, and gives it to the chiefs. The steer is killed, and the chiefs stay to eat
[644] it, together with a cow. Then they ask the king for permission to go: "Our lord, shall we not go now? (we will go now!)". The king answers: "Why, hold fast (to) God (that is: stay!)" So the chiefs remain; and beer is strained, and they stay to drink. Afterward the king says: "Well, all right, go now with God!"

When they come home and approach their villages, the drum is beaten, and the people dance to the drum; then they address the people: "O ye people, we have returned; may the country live in peace!"[1]

18. Making Boats for the King.

539 *A kẹ [illegible] Ko [illegible] Ka [illegible] gẹ kịng [illegible]*

---

[1] The dyęk-antelope belongs to the king, out of its hide clothes for the king's wives are made.

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 F323 Shilluk F323

30. The Shilluk kings.

173
643

1. *Nyikaŋ*	2. *Dāk*	3. *Shāl*
4. *Akūoi*	5. *Odāk*	6. *Dwǫt*
7. *Bwǫch*	8. *Dǫkǫ*	9. *Abudǫk* (queen)
10. *Tugǫ*	11. *Okwǫn, Okǫn*	12. *Nadwai*
13. *Nyaḡḡǫ*	14. *Kudit*	15. *Nādwatchǫ*
16. *Awǫi*	17. *Akwǫt*	18. *Awin*
19. *Akǫch*	20. *Nyidǫk*	21. *Kwatker*
22. *Ajǫk*	23. *Kwǫjkǫnyǫ*	24. *Yǫr*
25. *Akǫl*	26. *Kǫr*	27. *Padiet.*

A. E. S. has the following list (according to Father Banholzer at Lul, and Dr. Giffen at Doleib Hill).

1. *Nyakang*	2. *Dag*	3. *Odage*
4. *Kudit*	5. *Dokodo*	6. *Bog*
7. *Tugo*	8. *Nya Dwai*	9. *Nya Abudok*
10. *Muko*	11. *Nya To*	12. *Nyakwang*
13. *Okon*	14. *Nya Gwatim (N'dwagi)*	15. *Nyadok*
16. *Akwot*	17. *Abudok*	18. *Awin*
19. *Akoj*	20. *Nadok (Nyadok)*	21. *Kwad ker*
22. *Ajang*	23. *Gwin kon (Kwon kon)*	24. *Yor Adodo*
25. *Akol*	26. *Kur Wad Nadok*	27. *Fadiet Wad kwad ker.*

31. The Burial of a King.

539*

Nāṅ ba ni wkǫi, ni bēje wǫt. Ka [illegible] chwǫjǫ, ba fyǫwǫ yǫch, ba ebǫ, ba [illegible] wǫng, ba yǫǫ dwǫi, ba gǫ kǫt, gǫn ǫ [illegible] kǫl, ba gǫ kwǫm fǫn. Ka [illegible] gǫi bǫ gǫ [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. Ka gǫ rwǫng bį [illegible], ba wǫ kǫl; a [illegible] [illegible], ba bēje wǫt, ba rwǫ bį [illegible] kwǫm. [illegible] [illegible] ba gǫ kǫl, ba gǫ bēje wǫt; ba [illegible] [illegible] wǫjǫ, ba [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]; ba mǫn [illegible] bį [illegible] bį [illegible], ba [illegible] [illegible] bį [illegible] bį [illegible]. Ka wǫt [illegible], dǫ ḇǫ gǫ mǫn [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. Ka gǫ [illegible] wǫt, [illegible] dwǫi [illegible]. Kǫ gǫ [illegible] ba kǫng, ba rwǫ gǫ [illegible] [illegible]. Ka gǫ [illegible] wǫy wǫt; [illegible] ǫ [illegible], ba gǫ [illegible] [illegible]. Ka [illegible] dwǫi bēje wǫjǫ[1] Tūng, ba wǫjǫ[1] Mwǫmǫ, [illegible] bēje bēje. Ka gǫ [illegible], mǫn ǫ [illegible] [illegible]; ǫ [illegible] gǫn, ba [illegible] gǫi [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], ba gǫ chwǫjǫ.[2] Ka gǫ [illegible] wǫ ǫ wǫm. Ka [illegible] [illegible], ba [illegible] [illegible] yǫch, ba fyǫn ǫ [illegible], gǫ [illegible]. Ka [illegible] wǫ [illegible] yǫch [illegible], ba [illegible] fǫn; ǫ [illegible], ba [illegible] [illegible]. Ka [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. Ka [illegible] [illegible] gǫ gǫr, ba gǫ [illegible], ba gǫ bēje yi yǫi, ba [illegible] bēje yi yǫi gǫr, ba [illegible] bēje yi yǫi gǫr, ba [illegible] bēje yi yǫi, bį [illegible], bį [illegible]. Ka fǫ kǫl, gǫn [illegible], mǫn [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], mǫn [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], fǫ [illegible] [illegible], ba gǫ bēje yi yǫi, gǫ [illegible], [illegible] gǫn fǫ ǫ [illegible], bį [illegible] gǫn fǫ ǫ [illegible]; [illegible] yǫ [illegible] yǫi, [illegible] yǫ yǫi yǫi. Ka yǫi [illegible], ba

---

[1] *wǫjǫ*: reaching T., and reaching M., i. e. from T. unto M.

[2] generally: *chwǫjǫ*.

*539 *[illegible]*

*539 766 ●643 When the king disappears (that is, dies),[1] his body is laid in a hut. A cow is speared, its skin removed, and cut into strips. When they have finished this, trees are brought, they are hewn with a certain axe, and then they are driven into the earth. With the strips (of skin) they unite these trees to a bier. When the bier is ready, they bring the body of the king — but without the people knowing it — lay it on the bier, and put it in the hut again. The body is adorned with a leopard-skin. Two girls are brought, and are put into the hut, where the body of the king is. One holds his head, and one holds his feet. Each of the girls is given tobacco and a pipe. Now the hut is walled (all openings are walled with mud), so that there is no way for the air to enter. They (the two girls) remain in the hut, and die there. The people wait two months; about this time the worms (who have eaten the flesh of the three bodies) have turned into bugs, and they come crawling out through the roof of the hut. Now (the people know that) the flesh (of the three corpses) is consumed and only the bones remain. Then all the chiefs of the Shilluk country are summoned, beginning from Tunga,[2] and reaching to Mwomo; all, all the chiefs. And they come, each one brings a cow; when they come near Fashoda, they gather these cows at one place; and the cows are speared. Now it is said publicly, "The king has disappeared." And the people weep. One of the cows is skinned, the skin is tanned and made into a bag. The bones of the king are put into this bag; and they are buried in a secret place. But still the mourning goes on, all, all, all the people mourn. And spears are gathered, a great many; they are tied together, and put into a boat; and cattle-bells are put into the boat, and beads, and pots, and dishes, and gourds. And two people are brought, a man and a woman, fine people, they are laid into the boat, they are bound, their hands and their feet are bound; one is laid in the back part, and one in the front part (of the boat). The boat is rowed into the middle of the river, there the boat is pierced, so that water enters into it. The men who row the boat, get into another boat, and the boat which they have pierced, sinks down with the people in it, and all the goods, together with the people, perish in the river.

31. The Man who took the Law into his own Hand.

*539 *[illegible]*

---

[1] Of a king it is not said: "he dies", but "he disappears". — It is said: the king does not die of his own accord, but when he is very old, or sick, and the people think that his death is near at hand, his chief wife strangles him with a cloth.

[2] = Tonga.

*539 622 687 skinned. The chiefs said, "Cut it up! It is the property of the magistrate." So the meat was put into the house of the magistrate. All the people came; the crocodile was cooked by the chief, the crocodile of the magistrate. He called all the people, and invited the neighbouring chiefs too; they ate the crocodile. The people said, "Ah, this crocodile is good!" Some days later they again caught a crocodile, and it was eaten by the people.

But the district chief had heard about the matter. He called all the chiefs of his district together; they came, and he began, "You chiefs, I want to ask you something, it is the thing which you got from the river there." They asked, "What do you mean?" He replied, "I am asking for some animal you killed." They said, "We do not know!" He asked, "Why, has not a crocodile been eaten here in somebody's village?" They answered, "Yes, that is true, it has been eaten by the little children." He said, "Make amends for it!" But they refused, saying, "We will not do that." Then he said, "Well, we will go to Fashoda (to bring the matter before the king)." They said, "All right, let us go!" So they went, and arrived at Fashoda. There they told their case, saying (the district-chief speaks first), "My lord, I am in difficulty about some matter, the matter of a certain man, he has eaten a killed animal, an animal belonging to the magistrate." The king asked the accused one, "Why did you eat it, man?" He answered, "My lord, I did not know." The king said, "Why! go, and make amends! You are to give ten cows and a man." The chief brought what was asked, into the enclosure of the king, so that all people heard it, and learned to be careful.[1]

34. How Fashoda became the Royal Residence.

*539 *Ka jāk [illegible] Tugo, jāk e [illegible] Nyowājo. Ka [illegible] bįr[2] [illegible] [illegible] Tugo [illegible] Puchōdo [illegible]*

*539 ● 683 173 King Tugo reigned, he reigned in his own village, which was called Nyowājo. And there were oxen, they used to come (to some place), they were oxen without horns, called chod, they used to dig the ground of that place with their heads every day. When the king saw that, he said, "My! why are the oxen always digging the ground?" He said, "They like this place." So a village was built there, it was Fachōdo. Tugo moved from his place into this new village. He said, "This village shall always remain the village of election (the village of the king)." Since that time the people elect the king in it. When the king (Tugo) had finished his reign, he said, "My son shall be elected!" And he was elected.

---

[1] Crocodiles belong to the king ("to the authority, magistrate,") nobody is allowed to eat them without permission of the king or the district chief. Here the chiefs of the villages try to usurp the privileges of the district chief.

[2] From *lędę* "to be".

539*
647●
173

35. A Law-suit about Dowry.

539*

Kęn ką jī kę yȯlį, ke jī kęlę, ke jī pęke gęn. Ko pān gęi chịęk, ke ęnį y' yȯrįkę, kịne: yȧ yịdą kẹchẹ jām! Kịne: kẹchẹ jam kẹchẹ yȧn![2] *Kịne: yį wąjį kȯpą? Kịne: yį wąn an? Kịne: yį win. Kęye yęt kẹchẹ yȧn! Kịne: kęyąnį kwȧkę yįn? Kịne: jal tęk wąn? Kịne: jal tęk ȧnȧ. Kịne: kwȧkę jām! Ko jane kwȧn. A, ȧnȧ, yį ve a yȧm? ęęk pwąę ȧyer? Ko jī kęlį kę gęn. Ko jī kęlę, ke rįį e yȯlį, ke gęn gęn kịne: wun, wą chęęį kȧ ǫȧl ȧn. Kịne: wu kęmo kwąf ǫȧį? Wį kęmo kwąfe ęęk. Ȧlį, yȯįnȧn! Kịne: ȧ, wun, wąį kȧ, cha wą yįrįį ęo kį kwąfe ęęk, ȧį ȧ kęęt, cha ęęk kȧįį. A chęęk jī, a chįęk jī, a kįmȧ kwąįp, a kwȧn jam, ke ęęk pįęke kẹchẹ gęn. Ko jī yįnį, jįk ȧįnȧ; ąę chȧke ker gęn. Ę, ąrą kȧnį gęn. Kịne: wu tęn yen ęnį; ąę ęęk kwȧke gęn kįįk, ąę wąjį kȧkį. Kįn ęnį ȧnȧn, a kȧk kęęȧk. Ko rįį e kįnę chęį, kịne: yȧ, kįmȧn, yį ke wȧ jȧl a kįr? yį ve kęre ęęk tęrą? Kwȧįfį wȯch! kȧį, chȧkȧ kį ęnį! jal, ke yį*[3] *wȯch kį ęęk chich. Ko e wȯįį kį ęnį, ke yį kęįk, ke tęęk pān gęi chįęn, kịne: yį chȧkȧ kį ęnį, kęn gęi ȧnȧn. Dȯęk! A kęęk, a tęęrį wąyą, a chąąį tęęk gęi, a kįn, a tęre ęnį tȯrį gęn. Ko yį yįt chęk, kịne: dȯęk, ǫȧl kȧ ǫȧį. A kąį gęn, a kȧl ęęk, ke ęnį wȧįkȧ gęn.*

At a certain time the people went to ask for indemnities, they went to the village (where the debtor lived), and sat down. The people of the village assembled. When the man began to ask, "I want indemnities for certain goods," the debtor replied, "I do not know anything about goods (which I owe you.)" The man asked, "Have you not been told?" He replied, "By whom?" The man said, "By your father." The debtor said again, "I do not know of anything concerning debts." The man said, "Why do you not know it?" Then it was asked, "Who is the judge?" The answer was, "That man is judge." He aid, "Count the goods (which you claim from this man)." All the goods were enumerated. The judge said tho the debtor, "Man, why do you deny? Is it not true what he said?" And the people went to bring the matter before the king. They found the king, and the matter was told. They said, "Our lord, we have come with this man." The king asked, "What a palaver do you have?" They answered, "We have a palaver about cattle." "Well," said the king, "tell me!" The accuser said, "Well, our lord, we came to ask him (the debtor) about the matter of the cattle; but he refused; he said, he did not know anything about cattle. So I assembled the people, and when the people were assembled, I talked to him, and enumerated the goods, and the cows (which I said he owed me) were found right; the people consented (to my statement), the old people. He refused again to acknowledge it." After

539*
691
686
692

---

[1] ŋ is here conditional: "when".

[2] "the place, i. e. the matter, of goods is not known by me".

[3] < yí ę́ "you will".

*539 *gyẹlọ. Ka rịṭ e wẹ́rọ̀, ka nụ̂k kụ̂l gẹ́ gìr, ka ḍọk chōl ga pyār aṅwẹn, kị́ jè gá pyārẹ; rịṭ kệch; a dwọk chwak, a chịke chōl kẹ́ ḍọ̀k, kị́ jè, a kōbị rịṭ kịne: wei bẹ̄dẹ, ṭúṅà yè kẹ́r.*

173 The eldest son of a king whose name was Alẹki, was brought to be elected king. But he refused, and when he was informed secretly that they were *539 going to elect him by force, he went away and fled to the Nubian country, he with two of his brothers. And (during their flight, or in the Nubian country) they used to pound dura for food; the youngest of them was told (compelled) to bring water. (When they had gone) one prince (in the Shilluk country) said, "Let them stay there (in the Nubian country)." And they learned the Nubian language.

He came home again, and built himself a village, wich he called Pwot ("beaten"). He settled there, but he still continued saying, "No, I refuse to be chief; I ●[643 don't want to." So his son was elected, and he reigned. He carved bracelets out 301] of elephant-tusks.[1] When the king (at Fashoda) heard this, he became angry, and he sent an armed body to him, a great one. And he (the prince) had to make amends with fourteen cows and ten men; for the king was very much offended. Again an ambassador of the king was sent to the prince, asking for more cattle and men as compensation. Then the king said, "Now let him alone, the reason for his being so haughty as to cut ivory-bracelets was his wealth, and we have taken that from him."

44. The Cowardly King.

*539 *Jal mẹ̄kọ Akúṅọ̀ Bàkọ̀, ka e bẹ̄nọ, chama rịṭ, e chyẹ̄k, ka Chọlọ yēi, mẹn an ka lẹ̄da rịṭ anan; wa yēi kị ẹn. Ka jal mẹ̄kọ kyẹdọ: ẩ, faṭe rịṭ! A rāp̣ āṅọ? A chyẹkị nau, yâ kyẹ̄t! Ka jal ẹni e bẹ̄nọ, ka pẹ̄ka tūṅ yō̃, bẹ̣ lẹpe gọ̀n. Ká gọ̀ lẹ́pẹ́, ka Akúṅọ̀ Bàkọ̀ bẹ̄nọ̀, ka e buggo, ka e rẹṅ. Ka jal ẹni ko: yi rẹṅa kẹṅ? Ma yi kōba yin, che yina rịṭ? yi chyẹte ṅọ kẹ̄te? Ka ṭẹ̄rọ ko: â, wa chẹ́n ẹ̀nà yi ḍāp̣e nau? Ka Akúṅọ̀-Bàkọ̀ e bẹ̄nọ, ka ṭọ̄ṅa fān, ka ye yíyí. Tẹ̄rọ kudị yau. Gọy ṭōm! Tẹ̄rọ kudị yau. Ka jãgọ kōbọ: gọ̄ṅe wunọ! Ka wunọ gōṅ yaṅ ṭọnọ. Ká é rẹ́ṅọ̀, ka Chọlọ ṅẹ̄ṭọ: â, faṭe rịṭ! Ka Chọlọ ko: nẹk! Ka ṭọ̄ṅa yinọ, a pọr.*

173 A man whose name was Akūnyo Bāko, came and wanted to become king. He was a short man. The Shilluks consented, "This man shall be king now, we *539 are satisfied with him." But one man refused, saying, "No, he is not a king! What kind of king is he, this short man? I protest!" This man came and sat down on the side of a road, to lie in wait for the new king. While he was lying in wait for him, Akūnyo Bāko came. When he saw the man, he was afraid and ran away. The man asked, "Why do you run away? Was it not you who said,

---

[1] Formerly only the king was authorized to wear ivory bracelets.

he wanted to become king? What is chasing you?" When the people heard this, they said, "Ah, shall that man (this cowardly king) bring evil upon us?" And Akunyo Bako came, he turned towards the village, and he behaved like one possessed by a spirit.[1] But the people remaind silent. Then he said, "Beat the holy drum!" But the people remained silent. One of the chiefs said, "Loosen a rope!"[2] And a rope was loosened by a child. When he saw that, he ran away. And the Shilluks laughed, "Indeed, he is not a king!" The Shilluks said. "Kill him!" He ran towards the bush fleeing. 173 539*

45. Queen Abudok.

Kẹn Ḏókọ̀ṭ ka fen e bẹ̀dọ̀ ẹ bụ rịṭ; ka Chọlọ wìjẹ mûm; rịṭ bọgọn. Ka ṭẹrọ bẹ̄nọ yi Abụ́ḍọ̀k, ka e ko: é wiṭẹ wọn a mum yi bụne rịṭ. A kōbị kịne: kwánni rịṭ! A kwánní, a rẹ̄ní. A kẹḏọ, ẹn Abụḍọk, a dwai ṭẹ̄nọ, a mộjí, a wúdlị, a pẹ́gí yẹṭe ṭẹ̀p; ka a ṭẹme duọn, a pẹ́gí, ka aṭẹ̄p e chọ̀gọ̀, e ba pan. A kọl aṭẹm ṭẹ̄n, a pẹ̄gí, a pộní; a kẹṭị Bachōdọ, a wei gọ fen. A kóbị kịne: ẹ́, Chọlọ u núnị yi kwa rịṭ. A bāne ṅẹ̄ne kwa rịṭ. A kōbị: ẹ́, kwa rịṭ rẹ u lọ́gọ́ mùgọ̀, ka nị gẹ̄dị kị būte pârí, fârí nị doyị dộyọ́, ka e nụṅọ. U̲ ṅẹn bat kẹ̄nọ, u ṅẹn pọ̄l. A bāne ṅwọlị a ṅẹ̄nị. — Kwọn Abụ́ḍọ̀k. 539*

In the time of Dọkọ̄t the country was without a king. And the Shilluks did not know what to do, because there was no king. And the people came to (queen) Abudok, saying, "Alas, we are in confusion from not having a king!" She said, "Take this one (pointing to one of her younger brothers) for a king!" So he was taken, he was elected. Abudok went away. She brought seeds of the water-lily, spread them out in the sun, and ground them. She put them into a bag, the bag was very big, so that, when she put the seeds in, the bag remained unfilled. Then she brought a small bag, poured the seeds in, and it was filled. Now she went to Fashoda with the bag, and put it down there. She said, "Ah, the Shilluks will be decreased by the descendants of the king. In future time the descendants of the king will become many. She said again, "Eh, the descendants of the king will be like a sickness (to the Shilluks), if they build their village beside your (the Shilluks') village, your village will become very small, it will decrease. But they (the royal family) will become many, just as the branches of the calabash plant become many in the bush." Therefore the descendants of the king have become so many. — This is the story of Abudok. 173 539*

> [*Explanation given by the man who told this story:* "Abudok was a bad queen, and the Shilluks did not like her; they wanted a king. So Abudok presented to them one of her two younger brothers, whom she raised (educated), saying, "Take this one for your king." Abudok went away 643 ● 158 787

---

[1] When the new king is elected, the spirit of Nyikang takes possession of him; this is manifested by a shaking of the body, singing, etc.

[2] loosen a rope to thrash him!

*539
773
776

a great white cow, who came up out of the Nile and was called Deung Adok *(ḍeañ aduk)*. The white cow gave birth to a man-child whom she nursed and named Kola *(Kǫlǫ)*; Kola begat Umak Ra or Omaro *(Omarǫ)*, who begat Makwa or Wad Maul *(wat mǭl)*, who begat Ukwa (Okwa). These people lived in a far-off country, nobody knows where.

Ukwa was one day sitting near the river when he saw two lovely maidens with long hair rise out of the river and play about in the shallows. He saw them many times after that, but they would have nothing to do with him and merely laughed at him. It should be mentioned that their lower extremities were like those of a crocodile.

One day Ukwa found them sitting on the banks, so he came up behind and seized them. Their screams brought their father, Ud Diljil, out of the river, to see what was the matter. Ud Diljil, whose right side was green in colour and in form like a crocodile, whilst his left side was that of a man, protested mildly, but allowed Ukwa to take away his daughters and wed them, merely giving vent to a series of incorrect prophecies regarding them.

Nik-Kieya *(Nyakae)*, the elder sister, gave birth to two sons and three daughters, and Ung-wad, the youger, to one son only, named Ju, or Bworo. The eldest son of Nik-Kieya, was called Nyakang (Nik-kang or Nyakam, = *Ṅikāñ)* and inherited the pleasing crocodilian attributes of his mother and grandfather. Meanwhile Ukwa married a third wife, whose eldest child, a son, was named Duwat.

On Ukwa's death there was a furious quarrel between Nyakang and Duwat as to who should succeed Ukwa. It ended by Nyakang, with his sisters Ad Dui, Ari Umker, and Bun Yung, his brother Umoi and his half-brother Ju, acquiring wings and flying away to the south of the Sobat. Here they found the Shilluk country inhabited by wicked Arabs, so they drove them out and founded a most successful Kingdom. According to their genealogy this would have been about 1200 A. D., or later.

Nyakang had a creative power which he used greatly to the advantage of the Kingdom. In order to people the vast territory more quickly, he proceeded to create a people from the animal life he found in the forests and rivers. From crocodiles, hippopotami, and from wild beasts and cattle, he created men and women. When these had brought forth many children, the parent stock was removed by death, so that the children might not know of their origin.

*539
565
614
●643
773
776

The new creation and their offspring form the Shulla race or common people, in distinction from the direct descendants of Nyakang's family.

539*

The latter continue to bear authority and fill the priestly function to this 773
day. All outside the royal and priestly line are accounted Shullas.
Nik-Kieya still exists. She never died and never will. The western part 565
of the Sobat and part of the White Nile is her favourite abode. She often 614
appears, usually in the form of a crocodile, but at times in different forms 643 ●
and always in the river or on its banks. No sacrifices are ever offered to 776
her. When she wishes, she takes what is required from among men and
beasts; and when it is so, the people must not complain; indeed, it is an
honour when Nik-Kieya is pleased to take her sacrifice of man or beast
from a family.]

The Origin of the Shullas[1].

By Dr. T. Lambie, of Doleib Hill.

Nyikang, Duwad, Ju, Okil, Otin, and Moi were the sons of Okwa. Okwa 773
was the son of Omara from heaven. Nyikang's mother was Nyikaya, Okwa's 776
other wife was Ungwet. Nyikang and Duwad were twins, they lived far away to the south. Okwa was lost and his village was deserted, so the people asked, "Whom shall we elect king?" Part of the people said, "We will elect Nyikang," others said, "We will elect Duwad," so it came to pass there was war and the people were divided. Nyikang came and turned aside to the country of the Dim, and there he married the mother of Dak, and Dak was born. Dak was wicked and killed some people of the Dim, and the Dim said, "Booh! all the people are being killed!" So they agreed to kill him, saying, we will kill Dak. Another man, called Obogi, kept silence there at the council when they spoke, and when the people asked him, "Did you not understand our talk?" he said, "Ah!" like a deaf and dumb person. And they struck him and said, "This fellow dit not hear." Then Obogi went to Nyikang and told him about the plot. Nyikang replied, "Ah! very well, we shall see." So the father came and brought a wooden figure and put it up. And his son Dak played on the tom (stringed instrument), and when he had finished playing, he took off his bracelet and put it on the image in his house, and the Dim people came to his house and speared the figure. And when they thought they had finished killing it, they said, "He is dead, good!" They went away, and all the people came and began to lament saying, "Dak is dead." They killed a dog, and when they had finished, Dak came, while the people were dancing his funeral dance. Dak came in and saw them. And Nyikang said, "We will separate from you, we go to look for corn." So they came and stopped here in the home of the Shullas.

---

[1] i. e. Shilluks.

(c) *Nyareth* - The son of a *Nyireth*. 565
(d) *Kwanyireth* - The grandson of a *Nyireth*. 614

In some regions the members of the royal clan have become more numerous 644
than commoners and have supplanted them in the chieftainship of the settlements.
This has been possible because the members of the royal clan are
richer and tend to marry more wives, and also because of the system whereby
the offspring of a *reth* are planted out in various settlements away from
Fashoda. When one of the *reth*'s wives is about to give birth to a child 644
she leaves Fashoda and goes to her own village. As soon as the *nyireth* 614
is weaned he is placed in charge of some trustworthy settlement chief, 591
often the mother's brother, and is brought up among his mother's people.
When the child grows up and marries he builds a separate hamlet called *pa* 565
nyireth (unless he is called on to become *reth*), and thus becomes the
founder of a local lineage branch of the royal clan which may eventually
grow powerful enough to overthrow the dominant lineage and assume the
political aspects of its position in the settlement.

Daughters of a *reth* are not allowed to marry and therefore cannot 644
start lineages which would count as sister's sons to the royal house. 582

The Ororo

This clan is separate from the royal clan and consists of the descendants 565
of a disinherited branch. They are few in number and may intermarry 614
with the royal clan. It is said that the *reth* still has the right to disinherit 643
lineages of the royal clan but, apart from one traditional instance,
it is not certain whether the right has been exercised. The *ororo* are indistinguishable
from the commoner clans except for the special functions
they perform for the *reth* at his investiture and at the time of his funeral.
Traditionally, the *ororo* always smother the *reth* when he is ritually killed.
The *reth* always takes some of his wives from the *ororo*.

The Bang Reth

The *bang reth* are the personal attendants of the *reth*. Originally they 565
were captives from other tribes but later, volunteers from the commoner clans 644
in Shillukland, if they were poverty stricken, might leave their own clans and 727
become the *reth*'s retainers. In return for receiving cattle to marry with, 735
they tended animals, engaged in building and cultivation and performed all
the duties connected with the upkeep of the royal household. Apart from
these and their descendants, the *bang reth* also included all those who were 567
enslaved because their brothers were homicides and those who became possessed 672
by the spirit of Nyikang.

The *bang reth* are a fictitious clan; they cannot intermarry even though 565
there is often no blood relationship among them. The *reth* never marries 614
into the *bang reth* clan and, as an indication of the impossibility of this, 608
he calls the daughter of a retainer *kwara*, 'my grand-daughter'. 644

The *bang reth* live in a hamlet of their own near the capital in which 565
the *reth* resides. When he dies they, together with his elderly widows, go 644
and live near his shrine and look after it. When a *nyireth* is planted out, 614
his father sends some of his retainers to live with him; these become *bang*

614 565 644 *nyireth* and their descendants continue to live near those of the *nyireth* as a fictitious lineage.

The Colo

565 614 The *colo* consists of the main body of Shilluk clans, of which there are about a hundred. They are patrilineal clans tracing descent from the original followers of Nyikang, and also from those who have since migrated into and settled in Shillukland or were in occupation when the Shilluk immigrants arrived under Nyikang's leadership. Their origins are obscured in myth.

The *colo* clans like the *kwareth* are patrilineal and exogamous and marriage occurs between them. The difference is that the *kwareth*, through their connection with the founder of the present Shilluk regime and their ritual importance to the people as a whole, are treated with special respect and have special privileges.

CENTRAL AND LOCAL ORGANISATION

The Reth

643 [173] [175] The Shilluk people recognise one supreme head, the *reth*, who represents the country as a whole, regardless of territorial, social or kinship divisions. According to Shilluk tradition the present *reth* is thirty-first of the royal line which began with Nyikang, who led the Shilluk into their territory, conquered it, and established the social order. The spirit of Nyikang is thought to reside in every *reth* and to be passed from one to another down the line of his successors.(1)

The Settlement Chief

622 643 The settlement chief is traditionally directly responsible to the *reth* and executes his orders. He has certain religious obligations to the *reth*, such as building a house at Fashoda or maintaining the local shrine of Nyikang. The chief settles disputes in his territory, endeavours to keep order and harmony and to lead in community matters. He is selected by the lineage heads of the settlement and not by the *reth* who merely recognises his authority and position by investing him with the *lau*, personally knotting this robe over the *jago*'s shoulder.

The Headman of the Hamlet

613 622 The *jal dwong pac* has a status which varies according to whether he is headman of the principal hamlet of a lineage - in which case he is also a representative of his lineage within the settlement - or whether he is the headman of a subsidiary hamlet, in which case he is hamlet headman only and merely the senior member of a group of homesteads. The headman of a principal hamlet often receives a *lau*, sometimes directly from the *reth*, in other cases from the settlement chief. This, however, is only in confirmation and recognition of his status and there is no question of appointment by the *reth* or the *jago*. The headman of a principal hamlet represents

---

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk*, 1948, p.9.

his lineage in the settlement and, if he is a representative of the *dyil* 613
lineage, he will have a special status as representing the owners of the
land and the *jago* will treat him tactfully. The hamlet headman has charge 622
of affairs within his unit and represents his people in external affairs.

The Gol Leader

The owner of a homestead is responsible for the unmarried members of 592
his *gol*, but has no special status. The correspondence between territorial divisions and their representatives may be charted as below. (After Pumphrey, *S.N.R.* 1941, Vol.XXIV, p.7.)

631

TERRITORIAL DIVISIONS	REPRESENTATIVE AUTHORITY
Shilluk Tribe	The *Reth*
Luak & Gerr Provinces	Chiefs of Gol Nyikang & Gol Dhiang
Northern & Southern Marches	Chiefs of Muomo & Tonga
······Division *(Luak)*················	Division or Court Chief·····
Settlement *(Podh)*	*Jago*
Hamlet *(Pac)*	*Jal dwong pac*
Homestead *(Gol)*	*Jal Gol*

(Dotted line indicates permanent administrative divisions with chiefs made [648]
by the Anglo-Egyptian Government. Previously, there were no permanent intermediate territorial units between the two provinces and marches and the settlements.)

THE RETH'S POLITICAL POWER

The actual degree of power possessed by the *reth* has been a matter for 643
dispute among anthropologists. The majority of the early writers stressed
his power and authority. Seligman writes, "The Shilluk king is absolute 114
Head temporal and spiritual.."(1) Westermann and others have said likewise. Evans-Pritchard and other recent writers suggest that in administrative matters, the *reth* is not so powerful.

The chiefs of settlements and the hamlet heads are confirmed in their 631
offices by the *reth*. In no case, however, does he nominate them, for they 643
are elected by the people of the units they represent in virtue of their positions as heads of lineages dominant in the area. Likewise the chiefs of the provinces and of the northern and southern marches are traditionally determined and persons who are eligible cannot be passed over for reasons of political expediency. On the other hand, the chiefs owe their *reth* certain duties and are responsible to him for the state of their districts and their inhabitants, for defence of the settlement area and for the collection of tribute. If there is a choice of candidates for any position, each having the necessary ability and lineage qualifications, it is conceivable that the *reth* might use his influence to have as chief the man most amenable to his wishes; otherwise he appears to have little chance of exerting influence on the choice of his local officials.

---

(1) Seligman, *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, 1932, p.30.

LEGAL PROCEDURE

671 According to Hofmayr, Shilluk law "...is a law of tradition based on
decisions of Nyikang and of previous kings."(1) He maintains that justice
is very arbitrary and depends much on individual interpretation and custom.
The settlement chief has a court to which are brought cases which the *gol*
692 leaders and the hamlet headmen feel unable to settle or which are too
serious for them to judge. The accuser and accused appear before the
settlement chief and the headman is often called as witness, while the
elders assist. In major disputes, or if the settlement chief's decision
is appealed against, the matter is brought before the *reth*. Hofmayr
further states that important cases are treated by him and his judgement is
final.(2)

681 In the courts compensation is awarded for homicide and fines in cattle
or goats, according to the seriousness of the offence, are imposed for disputing
the *reth*'s judgement, refusing to pay royal tribute, wounding a royal
prince or princess, for theft, robbery and sexual offences. Apart from
minor offences it would appear that offenders were brought to court and
tried, not so much for private wrongs as for public delicts or crimes
coming under the general category of breaking the *reth*'s peace, disputing
the *reth*'s judgement, breaking the *reth*'s and Nyikang's laws.

643 Information suggests that in practice in the past the *reth*'s judicial
692 authority was by no means undisputed. Hofmayr maintains that an order or
judgement of the *reth*'s court was executed by the *reth*'s bodyguard, which
[696] consisted of a number of youths who followed the king everywhere. According
to the same authority "blood revenge is well known among the Shilluk
[627] and feuds do exist between persons, between families and also between
villages."(3) The fine for homicide is 10 head of cattle; formerly a
girl was taken instead of cattle. According to both Seligman and Hofmayr,
[682] the *reth* kept the cattle but might give two or three cows to the family of
the deceased as compensation. This practice is comparable to similar
legal procedures in communities in which feuds still flourish and the central
authority does not exercise very extensive political powers.

628 Intervention in a serious feud between two districts probably took the
form of the *reth* supporting one side against the other, and self-help,
643 sometimes back by the *reth*'s intervention, was possibly the means of obtaining
692 compensation and settling disputes which were not willingly submitted
by the two quarrelling parties to arbitration and the judgement of a court.
On the other hand, a description of the settlement of a feud by Oyler suggests
that the role of the *reth* is essentially that of peacemaker, but that
his functions can only be exercised if the disputants are willing to make
peace.(4) In this respect it would appear that the role of the *reth* is
[171] comparable to that of other ritual and peacemaking functionaries among the
Nilotes, such as the leopard-skin chief of the Nuer and the Dinka spear-chiefs.

(1) Hofmayr, *Die Schilluk*, 1925, p.157.
(2) *Ibid.*
(3) *Ibid.*, p.162.
(4) Oyler, *S.N.R.* 1920, Vol.III, No.3, pp.296-99.

631 643 It would appear, therefore, that in judicial and administrative matters the Shilluk *reth* is far from being an over-riding or autocratic political authority. Local chiefs seem to be free to follow their own traditional courses without much interference. In actual powers of government and administration, and in personal prerogative, the *reth* may be little more than a mediator in disputes and perhaps the balancing force which decides a quarrel one way or another. It is in ritual matters that his real position and powers are indicated.

THE RITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RETH

643 [782] Evans-Pritchard writes: "Both his functions and his status are primarily of a ritual order. He makes sacrifices on important occasions, especially for rain and for victory in war, and it is his duty to provide cattle for the sacred herds of Nyikang at Nyilual and Wau and a canoe for Nyikang's shrine at Nyibodho.(1)

182 It is noticeable that everywhere there is the closest connection between the political structure and the religious cult.

[773] (a) The territorial segments and their association with certain dominant lineages are explained in terms of the myth of Nyikang's division of the country among his followers who became the founding ancestors of many of the Shilluk clans.

182 622 643 778 (b) The lineage heads who are chiefs of settlements have ritual duties to the kingship. They perform ceremonial services at the time of the *reth*'s investiture, are responsible for building huts in Fashoda and for the upkeep of Nyikang's shrines and those of past *reths*. The tombs of the dead kings are indistinguishable from the shrines of Nyikang and have the same ceremonial importance in rain-making ceremonies, harvest rituals and so forth.

182 776 643 775 (c) The traditional customs of the people and the organisation of society in every way are considered to be the work of Nyikang directly or acting in the line of *reths*.

(d) The identification of Nyikang with the king is the central point of the Shilluk political, ritual and moral system. The people believe that Nyikang reigns and manifests himself in the *reth*. Nyikang is also the medium between the Shilluk and Juok - their chief spirit. The Shilluk consider the *reth* to be in close communication with the mystic forces of life, and Nyikang is the connecting link, participating in Juok as he does in the *reth*.(2)

643 The *reth* is considered to come under the category of Divine Kings, as described by Frazer in *The Golden Bough*. This is clear from the mode of his death and succession as well as from the duties he performs during his lifetime.

Succession of the Reth

643 644 669 Only the son of a *reth* who has reigned is eligible, and a *nyireth* may

---

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk*, 1948, pp. 16-17.
(2) *Ibid.*, p. 19.

643 attempt to usurp the throne any time after killing the *reth*. The *reth*'s
sons and the sons of previous *reths* are potential rivals and are not
644 allowed within Fashoda at night. The *reth* takes precautions to avoid
669 this danger. It is not known in which hut he sleeps and he is said to
wander round at night looking for intruders. This practice of regicide
no doubt accounts for the planting out of the *reth*'s sons from the time of
their birth.

The Death of a Reth

The *reth* is considered to have some mystic connection with the world
643 of nature, and the state of his health has an effect on the fertility of
the land, on the rains, the harvests and on the general material and
spiritual welfare of the people. If the *reth* becomes weak, the people
suffer and he must be killed. If he were allowed to die naturally the
spirit of Nyikang might be lost to the Shilluk for ever. There are a
number of traditions relating to the traditional mode of death suffered by
the *reth*. One maintains that the *reth* is strangled or suffocated by his
wives if he shows signs of senility; another that he was walled up alive
in a hut. The *reth* may be killed by a rival claimant to the throne at
[114] any time. Evans-Pritchard considers that the ceremonial putting to death
of kings is probably a fiction; there is no historical evidence for it
and some Shilluk kings seem to have reigned until they were quite old.
Both Howell and Evans-Pritchard consider that there is a close connection
between the tradition of killing the king, because of the bad effects of
his waning vitality, and the tradition that a rival claimant should seize
the throne "..... we must interpret Shilluk statements about the matter as
indicating not that any prince may slay the king on his own initiative, as
has been suggested, but that any prince may lead a rebellion as the candidate of discontent, particularly of the part of the kingdom to which the
prince belongs. If the king has lost support in the part to which he
belongs he will probably lose also both the resulting contest and his life
in it."(1) If this is so, the traditions of king-killing are perhaps an
interpretation, couched in symbolic terms, of the actual course of events
following a rebellion against the *reth*.

ELECTION AND INSTALLATION OF THE RETH

Detailed descriptions of the installation of a new *reth* have been
[114] given - apart from information by Hornol - by Howell and Thomson who were
in Shillukland at the election of King Fafiti Yor in 1943 and of his suc-
643 cessor, King Anei in 1944. In the events described by them the political,
ritual and symbolic nature of the *reth* and the importance of the Nyikang
myths may be clearly seen. In addition, the relationships between the
various social divisions and between the territorial and kinship segments
may be perceived in action. The whole tribe participates in some degree,
[624] for a series of ceremonies is carried out by the clans, in which each has
a special traditional role to play.

The interregnum is a period of danger, owing to the war which may
break out over the choice of a successor and owing to the absence of the

---

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk*, 1948, pp.34-5.

symbol of unity and cohesion. The main events are as follows:- 643

The funeral of the dead *reth* is carried out and is followed, a
year later, by mortuary ceremonies and funeral dances. These events
are chiefly a family affair and are organised by the *ororo* and the
kwareth.

The election of the *reth* concerns the whole of the Shilluk people 643
who are represented by the chiefs of the North and South Provinces. 666
The *reth* is chosen from among the *nyireth* by an electoral college,
composed of the descendants of the men who were, traditionally, made
chiefs of the first degree by Nyikang when he parcelled out the
country between eleven of his followers.(1) Three representatives
from the *kwareth* are also included, but the *ororo* and *bang reth* have
no representatives and take no part in the election although they are
important in the ceremonies of installation.

Just as Shillukland is divided into two territorial divisions, Gerr and 182
Luak, so for ritual purposes this structure is represented in special ritual 631
terms. The Northern province becomes *Gol Dhiang*, the Southern province
becomes *Gol Nyikang*. There is a rough correspondence between the two political
and the two ritual divisions. The chiefs of the ritual divisions are
the political chiefs of Golbany and Kwom, the two settlements just north and
south of Fashoda.

The election of a particular *reth* must have the backing of the whole 631
country, although at first sight it may appear that the choice lies with the 643
chiefs of Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang. The election cannot take place unless 666
they agree and this does not involve their own personal opinions solely.
The other chiefs all take part and represent the views of each section of the
country and if there is disagreement between the two provinces civil war may
follow. Agreement is usually reached before the electoral college sits and
formally proposes and elects the new *reth*. During the interval between the 643
death of a *reth* and the election of his successor custom requires that all 669
potential claimants should stay in their villages. This is the chance to
seize the *reth*ship by force, if a candidate wishes to do so and has the
necessary backing. Co-operation between the candidate and his settlement
chief is essential for only the latter has the necessary force and only a
reth's son is eligible for the *reth*ship. Other chiefs join the rebels and
fighting will begin. Until one side is defeated, or the *nyireth* is killed
there will be civil war.

The Installation Ceremonies

Skins, ostrich feathers and the various trappings for the pageantry of 643
the ceremonies are provided traditionally by certain clans and settlements. 778
The principal shrine of Nyikang is at Akurwa, where he is believed to have
disappeared in a storm. At his shrine are kept effigies of Nyikang and
his son Dak. Into these effigies the spirits of Nyikang and Dak may enter
at any time. On the death of a *reth* new images are made, for it is believed
that Nyikang's spirit, formerly in the *reth*, transfers itself to the
new effigy and remains there during the inter-regnum. At the installation

---

(1) Howell and Thomson, *S.N.R.*, 1946, Vol.XXVII, p.29.

643 of the newly elected *reth* Nyikang and Dak are brought in procession from
778 Akurwa to Fashoda with their priests to test the new *reth*.

The conventional opposition between northern and southern divisions
182 now becomes apparent. The forces of the southern province flock to sup-
631 port the *reth*-elect and wait at Debalo settlement while Nyikang and his
643 supporters assemble at Adodo. The two armies then march to Khor Arepajur
541 and a mock battle takes place with millet stalks instead of spears.
Nyikang captures the *reth*-elect and there is a procession to the shrine
of Nyikang at Fashoda. Certain ceremonies of a mystic nature follow,
which are not participated in by the whole people, as are the procession
and battle. The image of Nyikang is placed on the royal stool, then the
king-elect sits on it and the spirit of Nyikang is believed to enter into
him, and possess him causing him to tremble.

A few days later a second mock battle occurs between the king's supporters and Nyikang. The *reth* is victorious, for Nyikang has taken possession of him and the effigy is now merely the symbol of Nyikang and no longer the repository of his spirit. . In a final ceremony all the important chiefs and elders from all parts of Shillukland declare their allegiance to the new *reth*.

182 The installation ceremonies of the *reth* and the traditions relating
to Nyikang show how, at every point, the structure and political organisa-
643 tion of the Shilluk people is confirmed by ritual and by mystic symbols.

All rebellions and revolts are directed against the king in person
643 and not against the kingship itself. The unity of the Shilluk is such
669 that the various segments of the country can be represented by the common
symbol of the *reth*-ship. Nevertheless, there are powerful tendencies
towards fission within the structure. As has been shown, the kingship is
the subject of competition on the part of the *nyireth* candidates supported
by chiefs and forces available from their territories.

Of all the Nilotic groups for which there is any considerable inform-
171 ation, the Shilluk alone form a single political unit, or nation, as
opposed to a number of separate tribes or tribal groups which are cultur-
ally similar but not politically unified. At the same time, the princi-
ples of their political structure and social organisation are similar in
many respects to those of the rest of the Nilotes, in particular the Anuak.

AGE SETS

114 Apart from a brief mention by Hofmayr, the only information concerning
the Shilluk age sets is contained in Howell's article in *Sudan Notes and
Records*, 1941, Vol.XXIV.

On reaching puberty a Shilluk boy is initiated into the age-set
561 organisation. A Shilluk age set is known as *ric* and is made up of three
[881] or more subdivisions each consisting of men of approximately the same age,
who have herded cattle together as boys. A man always remains in the sub-
division into which he has been initiated, but a periodical shuffling of
the subdivisions alters their respective positions in an age set and the
whole age-set organisation. A reorganisation of the groups of subdivisions

778 made at all times of stress and misfortune. Everything round a shrine is
782 sacred, especially trees - they are particularly rare in Shillukland in any
case.

643 Certain Shilluk kings, particular incarnations of Nyikang, tend to be
776 identified with particular species of animals. If such an animal approaches
the shrine without signs of fear, it is assumed to be the form in which
825 Nyikang appears, and a sacrifice is offered at the shrine. Almost any
unusual behaviour on the part of an animal would lead the Shilluk to look
on it as a temporary incarnation of Nyikang. Nyikang's mother, Nikaiva,
is reputed to have been a crocodile and is believed to live in the river in
that form. A sacrifice is made to her by throwing a live sheep into the
river. The crocodile is generally spared even though these creatures are
a danger in river crossings.

177 There is a limited cult of the Dinka spirit Dengait, and also a belief
794 in the spirits of the bush and river.

THE CULT OF THE ANCESTORS

769 Beliefs concerning the ancestral spirits are vague. Reference is
made to *pan juok*, 'the country of the dead', which is reached by the spirit
775 after long wandering through the bush, but it is also believed that the
spirit persists in or around the grave. Offerings and sacrifices are made
to the ancestral spirits by the head of a household or local lineage on behalf
of the descendants. If there is sickness or misfortune or the possibility
of danger, a person will pray to his ancestors and make an animal
sacrifice to propitiate them.

The ancestral cult seems, however, to be overshadowed by the national cult of Nyikang and the royal ancestors.

TOTEMIC BELIEFS

771 Seligman suggests that Shilluk totemism may have been derived from the
Dinka because it seems so slight and unimportant. According to Hofmayr
825 and Westermann the clans appear to have totems and some clans derive themselves
from an animal or fish which Nyikang took and turned into people in
order to populate the country. Hofmayr states that totem animals are
[824] often killed but it is considered wrong to eat them.(1) Most totems are
animals but a few are plants. Children inherit their totems from their
[428] fathers; a woman keeps hers even when she is married.(2)

MAGICAL PRACTICES

The Witchdoctor (Ajuago)

756 *Ajuago* means 'man of Juok'. Such people are regarded as possessing
certain magical powers which they use for the good of the community.
791 People go to them when they are in need of help and pay them for their
787 assistance. The powers of the *ajuago* are believed to be due to their

(1) Hofmayr, *Die Schilluk*, 1925, p.235.
(2) *Ibid.*

173 Dak. In this story, and in the weaker, female associations of the effigy of
Cal, I think we may see represented by contrast the value which the
[182 Shilluk attach to courage and warlike qualities in their king, for the
643] aggressive, headstrong Dak supersedes in importance the weaker eldest son,
Cal. In songs Dak is the symbol of fighting.[1]

As a result of Dak's and Nyikang's quarrel with Dimo, Nyikang's wife's
father, Nyikang and his followers set off once more on their wanderings,
while Dimo and his people went in the other direction towards the Bahr-el-
173 Ghazal. It may be noted that Dak, in quarrelling with his mother's people
182 and cleaving to his father, showed in an exaggerated form the nature of the
602 loyalties of the royal sons today, as they should ideally be. Their claim to
importance for the whole kingdom is through their father the king and
his agnates, and not through their mother's people. A conflict of loyalties
between the father's and the mother's people, implicit in other Nilotic
societies, is here resolved in a myth of the Shilluk kingship by the aggression
of Dak against his maternal uncle Dimo. The main incidents in the further
173 migration of Nyikang, Dak, and their followers, are a fight with Garo, the son
of the Sun, Cang, and the crossing of a river, said to have been the Bahr-el-
Ghazal, beyond which Nyikang settled his people in their present kingdom.
Between them and their present home, there was a river covered with the
floating vegetation, the *sudd*, which even now accumulates on these reaches
of the Nile and its tributaries. One of Nyikang's followers, an albino,
asked Nyikang to clear a way for the people to cross by spearing him in the
river. Nyikang did so, and this letting of blood cleared a way for the Shilluk
to reach their present home.[2] Hence one of Nyikang's many praise-names,
or titles of honour, means 'crosser of the river' (the Bahr-el-Ghazal). The
fight with the Sun and his son, an incident which seems to suggest to
773 Hofmayr[3] some early contact between the Shilluk and the Galla, occurred
when the Shilluk were temporarily settled on the river bank, before cross-
821 ing. Nyikang then lost a cow. It was reported to be in the herd of the Sun,
and Dak set out with his followers to reclaim it. He fought with Garo, the
son of the Sun, and cut off Garo's hand or finger in order to get a silver ring
or bracelet. In the course of the fight, Nyikang drove the Sun back into the
sky, and revived his army by sprinkling them with water, or by touching
them with the silver bracelet. Another version is that Nyikang made the
643 Sun shine at night so that the fight might go on.[4] Others of Nyikang's titles
of honour refer to this victory over the Sun. The silver from the ring or
773 bracelet is said to have been used for silver emblems—a bracelet and spear

---

[1] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 63.

[2] Westermann, 1912, *et al.*

[3] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 61, where the Shilluk names for the Sun and his son, Cang and Garo, are said to be similar to those for a division of the Galla, *Yangaro*, *Tsangaro*, or *Djindjiro*, and other details of the story are said to connect with the Galla. If this is so, there must have been some contact between the Western Dinka of the Bahr-el-Ghazal and the Galla, since they have the same story.

[4] I do not give all the details of this story, of which there are many versions. The résumé here given follows Hofmayr, 1925, pp. 60–62, and Westermann, 1912, pp. 159–61.

643
ornaments—which are among the royal emblems of the Shilluk at the present
day, and are given to a new king at his installation.[1] The crossing of 773
the river and the fight with the Sun seem to be occurrences of great imaginative
importance for the Shilluk, as they are for the Western Dinka, in
whose mythology they appear in a different form, and by whom they are
associated, though in different ways, with a mythical leader who in many
ways resembles Nyikang. It may be mentioned that the sun, in Shilluk
country, seems to be at its hottest at the end of the dry season, just before 221
the rains, and its heat is in a sense overcome when the rains fall. Nyikang 132
is believed to bring the rain, and in that sense still revives his people by
sprinkling them with water. At this time, too, those who have been herding
cattle for the dry season on islands in the river or in pastures on the east
bank of the Nile, must return to their homes on the west bank to cultivate,
crossing the river in order to do so. The subduing of the Sun, and the
crossing of the river by Nyikang and his followers, thus recur in different 182
form in the lives of the Shilluk. They still have to take their cattle to pasture
across the river during the dry season, and return home with them when
the rains start. Westermann says that:

> The Shilluks along the White Nile cross over to the east bank; likewise the
> cattle of the Sobat Shilluks descend to the lagoons south of the Sobat. So in
> both cases they have to cross the rivers, which is, on account of the many crocodiles 136
> living in them, not undangerous, and is therefore done with much care
> and accompanied by weighty ceremonies in order to keep the crocodiles away;
> this forms an important part of the duties of the witch-doctor.[2]

In the account he gives of such a river crossing, it is said that the cattle are 182
led behind ambatch canoes which the Shilluk use.[3] It will be remembered 221
that the effigy of the 'crosser of the river', Nyikang, used in the installation 173
ceremonies for the king is also made of ambatch.[4] Nyikang is important 773
for that crossing on which the Shilluk herds depend for their grazing. In
another Shilluk text Nyikang asks his mother, Nyakaya, to dry up the river
in order to help his people against foreign enemies.[5]

In the stories here summarized, Nyikang, the leader and first king of the 773
Shilluk, is able to affect celestial phenomena—he may also raise winds and 776
bring rain—and he divides the river to lead his people across. By agnatic
descent he is linked either with a man from heaven or with a special creation
of God, and through his mother, Nyakaya, he is linked with the river.
He is also the leader by whom the Shilluk were first differentiated as a
separate people, and who gave them their present land. His praise-names 772
and titles of honour acknowledge and record his association with sky, river, 773
and earth. Apart from those already mentioned, he has the names 'heaven' 776

---

[1] Crazzolara, 1950, p. 39.

[2] Westermann, 1912, Introduction, xxix–xxx.

[3] Ibid., p. 172.

[4] Thomson, 1948, p. 159. This is a correction of Howell and Thomson, 1946, where it is said that the effigy of Nyikang was made of bamboo, like that of his son Dak.

[5] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 55.

772 or 'the above', and 'cloud'; he is called 'son of the Nile' and 'son of the
river';[1] and in hymns[2] he is called 'our earth' or 'master of the earth'. Thus,
773 all three regions of the Shilluk universe are nominally assimilated to Nyi-
776 kang, and he to them. It is the single person of Nyikang which gives all
three regions their coherence in a single world. There is no other figure in
Shilluk mythology, except his successors and representatives the Shilluk
kings, who thus associates earth, sky, and river, belonging in part to all.

Significance of Nyikang in the Shilluk World View

Although Nyikang was a man, and is conceived as such by the Shilluk, he
776 is believed not to have died, and thus he is not identified with ordinary men.[3]
He is said to have disappeared. Oyler[4] gives some of the expressions which
the Shilluk use of Nyikang's end; 'he was lost', 'he returned to his country',
'he went up', 'he became wind', 'he went and lives': all expressions imply-
ing that he did not die. He adds that the Shilluk say 'that if Nikawng should
[643] die, the whole Shilluk race would perish'. Even now the king of the Shilluk
is not spoken of as having died, though the later Shilluk kings, unlike
Nyikang and his immediate successors, are thought to have become mortal.
182 Since, as I have suggested, Nyikang is a notion by which the Shilluk appre-
643 hend a unity and coherence in the specifically Shilluk world, it is under-
standable that now, when a king dies, the Shilluk say, 'there is no land—
776 the Shilluk country has ceased to be'.[5] It is not simply that Nyikang and
his successors are thought to maintain the order of the Shilluk social and natural universe as though from a position above and outside it. In Nyikang, and in the kings, the parts which make up that order are correlated, and the correlation is apprehended in a single term, Nyikang. He and his successors are thought of as real historical persons, living at their own particular times and with their own unique characteristics and legends. They also represent the idea of a timeless state, unaffected by the chronological succession of events. Every king, representing Nyikang, represents the principle which unifies the Shilluk as a nation, and brings into focus the widest range of specifically Shilluk ideas about the order of nature and of society.

It was Nyikang who first separated the Shilluk people from others of the
182 same stock, who ordered them not to mix with their early enemies,[6] who
773 differentiated them among themselves by associating different lineages
776 with different territories and, where totemic, with different totems, and who
made the territorial divisions of Shilluk-land. Thus, he is both a unifying and a differentiating principle in Shilluk thought. The processes of individuation and separation, attributed to Nyikang, involve the creation of the ordered relationship of the individual and separate parts to each other, as the Shilluk understand it. Myths of Nyikang are ways of apprehending that relationship. It is said, for example, that the Nuba have some right,

---

[1] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 43.

[2] Ibid., *passim*.

[3] Ibid., p. 45.

[4] Oyler, 1918 (i), p. 115.

[5] Howell and Thomson, 1946, p. 18.

[6] Hofmayr, op. cit., p. 7.

the smaller units which they comprise. Such a logical model would be 631
misleading for the interpretation of the significance of the moieties, Gol 616
Nyikang and Gol Dhiang. These seem to function primarily, if not exclusively,
in the election of the Shilluk kings, successors to Nyikang. In the 643
election of 1943–4, of which we have a full description,[1] the two leaders of
the religious moieties had first to reach agreement upon the successor of the 616
dead king, and their choice was confirmed by a representative of the king's 631
clan, which is not identified with either moiety. An electoral college, representing
various settlements of Shilluk-land, then confirmed the choice,
which, according to Shilluk custom, had to be one of the princes whose
father had already been king. In this case the choice was very limited, and
the electoral college at once accepted the proposal made by the leaders
of Gol Nyikang and Gol Dhiang. Disagreement between these over the
choice of the king is said to have led to fighting between the moieties in the
past, and thus to civil war in Shilluk-land.

The division of the kingdom into Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang thus 643
becomes effective at the election of the king, and the preliminaries to the 616
installation of the new king do indeed create the division which Nyikang, 631
the king's ancestor, is said to have created in the past.[2] When the leaders
of the moieties have reached agreement, there is still a ceremonial opposition
between them until the king has actually been installed, when the moieties
are again put together in a single kingdom, the kingdom which Nyikang
originally united under himself. The Shilluk kings conceive their country
as a unity by dividing it into moieties, which separate and then unite, over
the election of the king. The theme of the resolution of duality and separateness,
perhaps an idea paralleled by that of crossing from one bank to another
of the river, in order to make a unity consciously recognized by the
Shilluk, may also be seen in other features of the installation ceremonies of
1943. The Shilluk king must be possessed by, or identified with, Nyikang, 643
so that some writers say that he 'incarnates' Nyikang. At the installation [775]
ceremonies an effigy of Nyikang is brought from northern Shilluk-land,
where Nyikang is said to have disappeared during a dance.[3] There is a
mock fight between this effigy, accompanied by the effigies of Dak and Cal,
and the king-elect. In this fight the king first retreats from the effigy, is
then captured by it, and finally must seize from it a small girl, who plays an
important part in the ceremonies. She appears to represent the wife of the
king's office and, since the king is to take the place of Nyikang, who represents
that office, he must also take the wife. Hostility between the king-

---

[1] The election may have been considerably modified by European and earlier rule, and the element of election by vote may have been stressed at the expense of a rather different principle, described below (p. 157).

[2] Howell and Thomson, 1946, p. 30. Pumphrey (1941) quotes a story in which the existence of Gol Dhiang, which may well be of later foundation than Gol Nyikang, is attributed to a later Shilluk king, but it is still a king who made it. This seems to refer to an earlier stage in the evolution of the kingship. Here we speak of the kingdom as it was at the election of 1943.

[3] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 45.

643 elect and the effigy of Nyikang then ceases, and the effigies are returned to
their shrines and the king is installed. Thus, in order that the king-elect of
the Shilluk shall be understood to have become one with Nyikang, separation
and opposition between him and the effigy of Nyikang are created and
resolved after fighting in mock battle. This resolution of the separateness
182 of the king-elect and Nyikang is also a unification of the moieties of the
643 Shilluk kingdom for, in the mock fighting, Gol Nyikang supports the
king-elect, while Gol Dhiang supports the effigy of Nyikang. Here again
631 Nyikang and the Shilluk king may be seen to represent the principle by
616 which the whole Shilluk kingdom is differentiated into parts, and by which
these parts are again comprehended in a whole. In the installation of the
new king the unity and integrity of the Shilluk kingdom under Nyikang
and the king are stressed at the same time as the *necessary* nature of its parts.
The uniting of the parts is not then a function of their subordination to a
larger national whole, to which their rights to separate existence are surrendered.[1]
It is a function of the acceptance by all of Nyikang and the
king, through whom are understood the notions of unity in diversity, which
have here been briefly discussed.

The Concept of Juok (*God*)

182 There is a Shilluk proverb which says that 'the Shilluk customs come
from Nyikang',[2] and I have preferred to suggest something of the general
776 significance of Nyikang, rather than to exemplify in detail all the customs
which the Shilluk say are derived from him. For, in saying that their customs
derive from Nyikang, the Shilluk are speaking both of an original
and supposedly historical king, and of complex notions of order and permanence
which form what we should have to call a metaphysical system.
When the Shilluk make an ideal correlation, whether of parts of the body
social, or parts of Shilluk-land, or parts of the natural physical ambient,
they introduce the concept of Nyikang. By reference to him they make the
most inclusive summary of the detailed order of their world and grasp that
order in a single term.

776 Nyikang is necessary for the Shilluk understanding of their social and
spatial categories, but he does not explain his own existence, nor the grounds
for the reality which, for the Shilluk, he ordered in the categories by which
they comprehend it. The nature of that reality is understood through the
notion of *juok*, God, to which I now turn. It has already been said that the
Shilluk explain the superiority and dominance of foreigners by a preference
[773] shown them by *juok*. In Shilluk story it is *juok*, not Nyikang,
who created the world, and *juok* is the being who maintains it and informs
it in its entirety. We have so far considered, in the Shilluk understanding
of Nyikang, a notion by which a wide range of phenomena are comprehended
in their interrelations and explained; to that extent we have

---

[1] In contradistinction to some European theories of the nation-state.

[2] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 376.

776 cosmological system. *Juok* and Nyikang are the most general explanatory
concepts the Shilluk have, *juok* or God accounting for the existence and
nature of reality, and Nyikang for the way in which the Shilluk order and
interpret it. Though Nyikang may be called *juok piny* (God below) he does
not represent the totality of what the concept of God means to the Shilluk.
God is also apprehended in other ways, and is addressed as God the Protector,
God the Giver, God the Creator, and by other titles which correspond
to the various situations in which the Shilluk need to invoke him,
or explain effects which they attribute to him. *Juok* is thus a common
[753] explanation for illness, for the Shilluk seem to use this word to account
for what is unknown in its nature but experienced in its effects.

The Shilluk God is the final explanation both for what is good and what
is evil, from a human point of view, but he is not himself good or evil.
Howell describes him as 'a remote and amoral deity . . . present to a greater
or lesser degree in all things',[1] and there are many indications in the literature
that it would be a mistake to understand, by the Shilluk word for God,
a being which could be defined in ethical terms. It is well, in discussing
Shilluk ideas, to distinguish their ethical from their religious conceptions;
for though Nyikang is the foundation of and sanction for Shilluk customary
behaviour, and God is the support of Nyikang, in neither case is there
any emphasis on intrinsic ethical qualities. Nyikang is not the teacher or
founder of an ethical system, and the attributes which he shares with God
refer, not to judgements of ethical value, but to the nature of reality and its
interpretation. In the biographies of the Shilluk kings their traditional
● [643] reputations are not mainly founded upon whether they were just or virtuous,
but upon whether the Shilluk prospered under them, whether they
were effective in war, whether they were brave, and whether they were
clever. Their caprices are also remembered.

182 Nyikang and Dak were the most important Shilluk kings and may be
643 regarded as models of what the ideal Shilluk king should be. Some account
776 of their lives has already been given, but it has perhaps not been made clear
that the stories recorded of them emphasize their intrigues, deceptions, and
intelligence, and the craftiness which seems for the Shilluk to be a sign of
173 the particular gifts of God. Thus, in the story of the attempt by Dimo to
776 kill Dak, when Nyikang made the effigy which was speared in Dak's stead, it
is said that[2] Dimo said 'Nyikang is a fool, but Dak is full of talk', which
means, says Oyler, that Dak was a man of ideas. He also says that Nyikang
'was an inventor, and many of the things in everyday use . . . were first
made by Nyikang'. In their contests with Dimo, Nyikang and Dak show
themselves both more powerful and cleverer, and in this cleverness they
are alike. Dak particularly, the son who effectively succeeds his father and
is second in importance only to Nyikang himself, is shown to be not only

---

[1] Howell and Thomson, 1946, p. 8.

[114] [2] Oyler, 1918 (i), p. 108. In this account, it is said that Dak made the effigy, though
in other accounts, e.g. Westermann, 1912, p. 159, Nyikang made the effigy.

mischievous and aggressive, but also a trickster who (vainly) attempts to deceive his father for his own advantage.[1] Westermann[2] quotes a text in which Nyikang commends a liar (perhaps a licensed jester), and another in which it is made clear that it was Dak's cunning which resulted in the catching of one of the creatures, described as a *juok*, with which the Shilluk kingdom was originally built up. The traditions of the Shilluk kings recorded by Hofmayr give details of their duplicity and cunning, their military prowess, and their cruelty and caprice. In this way they are approximated to God for these, and particularly intelligence and knowledge, are qualities by which a man manifests the power of God in him. The very nature of the election to the Shilluk kingship gives an advantage to the clever, as well as to the ruthless and brave, and the office must constantly have offered opportunities for intrigue and homicide. These features of 'divine kingship' tend to be somewhat elided in European accounts of the sacred character of the office, but some of the interest of the Shilluk kingship lies in the fact that the sort of sacredness it represents is little associated with an ethical code. Nyikang and the kings, along with God, are nevertheless for the Shilluk the sanctions for the customary rules and norms of behaviour. Thus the sanction for the customary moral order of Shilluk society is not conceived primarily in ethical terms, but as a manifestation of successful power and intelligence. So the test of kingship is success in the widest sense, and an unsuccessful king is soon killed by his rivals or disposed of by his retainers.[3]

173
776
643
156
[776]
643
[14]
[183]

Social Values: Cleverness and Success

That intelligence and success are attributed to the favour of God may be seen in other ways. Spirits, or those who are divinely inspired, are shown in Shilluk stories to be both clever and successful. They know more than others, and they can turn this knowledge to their own advantage. The Shilluk *ajuogo* (diviners), whose power is said to come from *juok*, are such people, and Oyler says of them that 'the Shilluks think of the witch-doctors or medicine men as good, not because their lives are good, nor yet because their practice is good, but because they are looked upon as the channels through which occult powers may be transmitted to men'.[4] They are personally prosperous because they are necessary, and they are necessary because they know better than ordinary men how to achieve success; such a divinely inspired person may therefore be approached for help in stealing

a cow, for example.

776
777
828
791
777

---

[1] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 61.

[2] 1912, p. 166.

[3] I have deliberately omitted any discussion of the killing of the Shilluk king, which by some authorities is said to be a ritual putting to death when the king's powers fail. The evidence for this is very confusing; in the records of the kings given by Hofmayr (1925), some clearly have died or been killed without ceremonial. It is difficult to reconcile this with the suggestion made by some authorities that the killing of the king is a ritual act performed to maintain the fertility and vitality of the land, cattle, and people, and that the ceremonial killing is believed to be essential for this, though misfortune for the whole land may later be attributed to some inadequacy in the funeral rites.

[4] Oyler, 1920.

a cow, for example. In a text given by Westermann[1] the hare is taught and
538 saved by *juok*. The hare (or rabbit) is said by Hofmayr to be the favourite
[825] figure in many Shilluk animal stories, and the stories quoted by him and by
Westermann show how clever, and how lucky, the hare is. A story given by
[773] Hofmayr[2] about the hare's eating young crocodiles appears in a different
form in Westermann,[3] where this act is attributed to Dak, the clever son
of Nyikang. The moral of these stories is that astuteness and trickery, like
knowledge, pay, and it seems as though unusual intelligence, ingenuity,
and luck associate those who possess them with the divine intelligence,
and the success for which God is the Shilluk explanation. Hofmayr gives
as a translation for the Shilluk expression *juoga tarr*, 'that which I have
from the highest being, my soul, my lot, luck, my other self, is favourable
to me'.[4] The large number of Shilluk riddles is an indication of the high
[182] value set on cleverness and ingenuity, and it is to be expected that these
● [643] qualities, held up for admiration in their stories and in their daily life,
should be ideally associated with Nyikang and their kings.

643 The kings, and all others inspired by *juok*, are sacred because they mani-
fest divine energy and knowledge, and they do so by being strong, cunning,
787 and successful, as well as by appearing to be in closer touch with the supra-
786 human than are ordinary men. The signs of this closer communion are dreams
and 'hysterical' possession, or at least some outward sign of contact with a
superior power. Examples of behaviour showing this are numerous. In the
installation ceremonies of 1943, when the king-elect was set on the sacred
stool of Nyikang at a climax in the ceremony, we are told that 'the *reth*
(king) was seized with a trembling fit at the critical moment, and certainly
he appeared to be in a dazed condition immediately afterwards'.[5] This
[171] form of behaviour is a common sign of possession by a power greater than
human among other Nilotic peoples. Though there was some reference
643 in these ceremonies to the king as the source of justice, and to the ethical
qualities necessary in a ruler, they were clearly distinct from the central re-
ligious significance of the ceremonies. So also, though we find many refer-
776 ences in Shilluk texts to God as the helper of the poor and the final court
of appeal in trouble, his activity in these respects is not to be taken as an
indication that he is only or primarily an apotheosis of ethical virtue. Many
[782] of the hymns to Nyikang and God are laments that the land is being de-
stroyed because they are not helping, and we are told that when their
prayers are not answered, the Shilluk may curse Nyikang for not assisting
them.[6] A Shilluk proverb says that 'God threads good and evil men on a
single string', suggesting that, in some circumstances at least, God does not
seem to reward virtue and punish vice.[7] In other texts he is shown as the
ultimate sanction for customary ethical behaviour, as a helper, and as a

---

[1] 1912, p. 180.

[2] Op. cit., 155.

[3] 1925, p. 376.

[4] Op. cit., p. 193.

[5] Howell and Thomson, 1946, p. 62.

[6] Oyler, 1918 (ii), p. 285.

[7] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 376.

judge, for, as the source of both good and evil, he can be regarded as indifferent, 776
or friendly, or hostile, according to the judgement of the individual
in any particular situation. His existence is taken for granted, and what
people know or think of him does not alter nor define nor limit him. It is 681
suggested by Hofmayr that the idea of punishment for wrong done is connected 775
rather with the dissatisfied dead and with the ancestors than with
the direct action of God. It is they who bring it about that God punishes the [776]
guilty.[1] Such beliefs are accompanied with very little elaboration of ideas
about the state of the dead. Stories about the land of the dead, where all is
quiet, as it is in the Shilluk capital of Fashoda, seem to represent fancies
rather than traditionally formulated beliefs. The dead are in some sense
nearer to God than are the living for they exist increasingly in a world of
ideas, as the impressions they left upon their descendants become fainter
with the passage of time; but, as another Shilluk proverb says, 'man does
not think about death'. They pray that they may be helped in this life.

Association of Nyikang with Light and Knowledge

Mention was made earlier of a contest between Dak and Dimo, in which [773]
Dak struck his opponents blind, until they accepted his superiority, when 776
he restored their sight. The same story is sometimes told of Nyikang and
Duwat.[2] Since Nyikang and Dak represent the way in which the Shilluk
know the order of their world, as well as being themselves examples of
knowledge and intelligence, it is appropriate that the power to blind people
should be attributed to them in myth. Another myth tells how Nyikang, in
order to capture some sorcerers for his country, covered the earth with a
shadow so that they could not see anything.[3] This association of Nyikang
with seeing and light, and thus, I suggest, with knowledge and understanding,
occurs again in the belief that Nyikang sometimes shows himself
in dreams as a bright light;[4] he appears also, among other forms, as a white
bull. Dak and other kings appear also in the form of a white egret. The 643
logic of this symbolism is not specifically examined in the literature, but
in Shilluk thought there seems to be some association between light and
sight, and Nyikang and the kings. In the installation ceremonies of 1943,
we are told that 'all objects of great sanctity were covered in white cloth . . .
with all cattle [for sacrifice] it was evident how careful the Shilluk were to
see that the animal was blindfold'.[5] At the conclusion of the sacrifices
which marked the stages towards the complete installation of the king, then
representing Nyikang, these wrappings were torn off. The significance of
this may be partly that such objects, which are holy, are also dangerous to
ordinary men who must be protected from them. In the installation ceremonies, 643
the Shilluk fled when they supposed that Nyikang had come, and 781
again fled from the effigy of Dak, with 'a mixture of fear and laughter'.[6] One

---

[1] Ibid., p. 232.
[2] Westermann, 1912, p. 168.
[3] Oyler, 1918, (i), p. 108.
[4] Seligman, 1932, p. 76.
[5] Howell and Thomson, 1946 p. 78.
[6] Ibid., p. 26.

643 theme of these ceremonies was the avoidance of Nyikang and a fear of his
781 power, accompanied by the veiling of the objects particularly associated with him. The complexity of this behaviour, particularly the 'fear and laughter', demands a more penetrating analysis than is possible here.

Conclusion

121 In such a brief account it has been possible to give only an outline of the
772 cosmological ideas and social values of the Shilluk, and it has been inevitable also that these should have been somewhat over-formalized and systematized. Shilluk cosmological ideas are embedded in belief and action. They are not systematized by the people themselves, who reveal them only by their sayings and their behaviour. It is impossible to give an account of them without abstracting them from the reality, formulating them as ideas with a certain degree of coherence between them, and thus constructing a system which has no exact counterpart in the thought of the Shilluk themselves. Such an account is bound to show, here and there, that effort to achieve consistency which is part of our tradition, but not of theirs. I have
776 tried to show how the order known to the Shilluk is dependent upon their belief in a mythical hero and king, Nyikang, who is the figure to which
[182 every subsequent Shilluk king is assimilated in thought. This assimilation
643] is enacted in the ritual for the installation of each new king. Nyikang is an analogue, for the Shilluk, of the power which created and maintains the universe. That power, which I have been content to call God, is of greater importance to the Shilluk as a source of vitality, both intellectual and physical, than as a being with ethical attributes. Nyikang and the kings similarly belong not to an ethical, but to a metaphysical system. Shilluk religion is
[182 concerned with the maintenance, as a divine order, of the order in which
643] they live and have always lived. The kings, and Nyikang, are held to represent that order, which without them would not exist. The death of a king
643 and the installation of his successor, are therefore of critical importance in the Shilluk kingdom, and that importance is marked by ceremonies of great imaginative and symbolic richness. The importance and uniqueness of the king is similarly emphasized by the existence of a special vocabulary used of him, and by various special observances which may be studied in the literature. They mark him off from ordinary men, no less than his titles—'first-born of God', 'child of God', 'reflection of the ancestors', 'master of the world', 'last-born of God', and others.[1] Any particular king, however, is also, as an individual human being, to some degree unequal to the office. The Shilluk have no superstitious reverence for the individual human king, and many kings have been removed by violent death when, for one reason or another, their people have tired of them. It is, perhaps, chiefly after the climax of the installation ceremonies that the dignity of the office, and the human nature

---

[171] [1] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 150. The 'first-born' and the 'last-born' have special status, at least in Dinka thought, because the first 'opens the way' for the others, while the other 'closes the way'. They are, so to speak, the alpha and omega of generation.

of its occupant, are most clearly recognized. Then the elected king, wearing 643
on his wrists the emblematic silver bracelets and followed by a bearer carrying a fan made from the wings of the saddle-billed stork, comes down from the mound of the shrine at Aturwic; he is lifted on to the sacred stool of Nyikang, and receives the allegiance of the chiefs of settlements, who stick their spears into the ground before him. Though he sits in state as a king, he is admonished by the chiefs and told what is expected of him. At the election of 1943–4, the chief of Tonga said to the king; 'Our job is not to keep order, that is your job. Our duty is to supply you with choice morsels 182
of hippo meat.'[1] Although he was speaking of a new, administrative situation, we may see here the idea of the king as a source of social order, who 643
fulfils his function merely by existing. The king's office keeps the Shilluk in palpable relation with an ideal order, which they hold to be the true order of their universe. There is a Shilluk proverb which says that 'the Shilluk only believe what they see'.[2] In their human king they are also able to see what they believe.

---

[1] Howell and Thomson, 1946, p. 71.

[2] Hofmayr, 1925, p. 377.

SELECT SHILLUK BIBLIOGRAPHY

113

Bannholzer, P. L., and Giffen, J. K. *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (ed. Count Gleichen), 1905.
Beltrame, G. *Il Fiume Bianco e i Denka*, 1881.
Crazzolara, Fr. J. P. 'Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Religion und Zauberei bei den Schilluk', *Anthropos*, 1932.
—— *The Lwoo. Part I, Lwoo Migrations*, 1950.
Evans-Pritchard, E. E. *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan*, 1948.
Frankfort, H. *Kingship and the Gods*, 1948.
Frazer, J. G. *The Golden Bough*, part iii, 1911.
Heasty, Rev. J. A. *English-Shilluk Shilluk-English Dictionary*, 1937.
Hofmayr, Fr. Wilhelm. 'Religion der Schilluk', *Anthropos*, 1911.
—— *Die Schilluk. Geschichte, Religion und Leben eines Niloten-Stammes*, 1925.
Howell, P. P. 'The Shilluk Settlement', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1941.
—— and Thomson, W. P. G. 'The Death of a Reth of the Shilluk and the Installation of his Successor', ibid., 1946.
Munro, P. 'Installation of the Ret of the Chol (King of the Shilluks)', ibid., 1918.
Oyler, Rev. D. S. 'Nikawng and the Shilluk Migration', ibid., 1918 (i).
—— 'Nikawng's Place in the Shilluk Religion', ibid., 1918 (ii).
—— 'The Shilluks' Belief in the Evil Eye. The Evil Medicine Man', ibid., 1919.
—— 'The Shilluks' Belief in the Good Medicine Men', ibid., 1920.
Pumphrey, M. E. C. 'Shilluk "royal" Language Conventions', ibid., 1937.
—— 'The Shilluk Tribe', ibid., 1941.
Schweinfurth, G. *The Heart of Africa* (Eng. trans.), 1873.
Seligman, C. G. 'The Cult of Nyakang and the Divine Kings of the Shilluk'. *Report of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories*, 1911.
—— *Egypt and Negro Africa*, 1934.
—— and Mrs. B. Z. *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, 1932.
Thomson, W. P. G. 'Further Notes on the Death of a Reth of the Shilluk (1945)', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1948.
Westermann, D. *The Shilluk People. Their Language and Folklore*, 1912.

Other body marks are also made at will and have no religious significance. 304
The people say that it is nice to have those marks on the body, especially for
young men and women and for dancing festivals. Those marks take many forms - 177
scorpion, tiger, geometrical designs, or even military signs, especially that
of a sergeant on the upper arm.

Clothes.

Hofmayer states that "... So gross die Aufmerksamkeit und Vorliebe 291
für Putz und Schmuck, so gering die Sorge für die Kleider."(18) He also writes
" Während der Mann im Shilluklande fast immer ohne Kleidung ging, stand es mit [855]
dem Weibe in dieser Hinsicht anders." (19) and " Langsam beginnen nun auch unter
diesem Volke, seitdem christliche Kultur und Religion ins Land gezogen ist, An- [177]
zeichen einer besseren Zeit sich einzustellen. Bereits kann man die Nacktheit
der Shilluk von diesem Lande als verschwunden betrachten." (20). During my so- [177]
journ among the Shilluk I noticed one great difference among the Shilluk and
the other Nilotic tribes , this being that the Shilluk were always dressed -at [171]
towns as well as in their own villages, children being the only exception -
and others were not. Their dress is called in their own tongue LAUO, and consists of a piece of cloth of any colour, but mainly white. The LAUO is placed round the body, so that it reaches down to the knees and is knotted in a special way on the left shoulder by men (21) and the right shoulder by women. Women also wear some other underclothing which is well described by Hofmeyer.(22) But the question is that the LAUO is a standard Shilluk dress; it is neither European nor Arabic from the northern Sudan. It stands unique and the Nuer or the Dinka, who are supposed to have some kinship with the Shilluk, go, men and
women , quite naked. Hofmayer's statement, as quoted above, was written in 114
1925. It is quite impossible that the Shilluk have altered one of the most
important habits over a period of 30 or 50 years, taking into account the extreme- 291
ly conservative spirit which all authors attribute to the Shilluk and other
Nilotes. Secondly, if the Shilluk men began to dress due to the introduction [177]
of Christian culture and religion, they would have adopted the European dress, (23) rather than invent a new type of dress foreign to both missionaries and Moslems. Or, if this were due to Christian culture, why did it not produce the same effect among the Dinka and Nuer, among whom comparatively more missionary work has been done than among the Shilluk ? Hofmayer contradicts himself in the same book. Cal, the second Shilluk king, who lived about 1580 A.D., before he died, washed himself, and " Nach vollendeter Waschung kleidete Cal sich an.." (24). This means that the Shilluk used to dress themselves from the beginning of their known history.

I have also no knowledge of a society in which the differences bet- [171]
ween the two sexes go, or went, as far as that which we could understand from
Hofmayer's description, i.e. men go naked while women have a complicated dress system composed of two pieces for the unmarried and of three pieces for the married.

There is also a traditional ceremony of importance in the Shilluk 291
political organisation. Every new chief of a settlement, which is a combined 621
group of lineage hamlets, has to be confirmed in his post by the king. This
takes the form of investing the new chief with a LAUO with the king "personally
knotting this robe over the jago's (chief) shoulder" (25). In a similar manner, 643
the chief of a hamlet (a lineage group, homesteads in a settlement) may be invested with a LAUO "directly from the king, or from the settlement) may be

[18] "such great attention and predilection for dress and ornamentation, so little care for the children"

[19] " While the men in Shilluk country almost always went without clothing, the women behaved differently in this respect."

[20] Slowly in the beginning, but since that time Christian culture and religion has also penetrated among these people, a sign that a better time is coming. Already one can see that the nakedness of the Shilluk is disappearing from this country."

291 invested with a LAUO, " directly from the King, or from the settlement chief." (26) This ceremony shows clearly that the LAUO plays a symbolic role in the
621 Shilluk political institutions. (27) Those institutions are more or less matters
● 643 of tradition , and traditions are rarely changed in a conservative society.

291 I have dwelt at length upon this problem, not only to criticize Hofmayer, but mainly to direct attention to one of the most important cultural characteristics of the Shilluks, in comparison with other Nilotic groups, and to show that this is not a newly acquired custom, but has deep roots in the past that can be explained by cultural contact or diffusion that affected only the Shilluk.

Notes.

113 (1) Seligman, C.G. & B. Z.; Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan. London 1932 P.40
(2) Hofmeyer, W., Die Shilluk, Wien 1925. p 247.
[63] (3) The word means the "meeting-place of the people".
(4) Tothill, J.D., Agriculture in the Sudan. London 1948. p.815
(5) Ibid, pp. 820/821
(6) Ibid, p. 812
(7) Seligman, B. Notes and Queries in Anthropology, London.
(8) " C.G., Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan, London 1932, p 13
(9) Hofmeyer W., Die Shilluk. Wien 1925. p 19
(10) Seligman , C.G., Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, No 11 London 1910, pp. 516/517
The figures in brackets indicate the number of persons measured.
(11) Seligamn, C.G., Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan. London 1932, p. 418
(12) see above, Table "G" No A 4, and A 1, have three lines.
(13) Butt A., 1952, p 28
(14) see above, table "G"
(15) see above , table "G", card No B 3, he was the son of king Yor, who adopted the name of Omar, and converted to Islam.
(16) Seligman C.G., Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan. London 1932, p 49
(17) Butt, A., 1952, p 28
(18) Hofmeyer, W., Die Shilluk, Wien 1925. p 344
(19) Ibid, p. 345
(20) Ibid, p. 345
[114] (21) This may be explained by the wish to let the right arm always free to throw spears or anything else. Also Seligman (1932, p 43) erred when he said that " the inhabitants of a village, Pathour, mark a scorpionseveral inches in length... on the shoulder - left for men and right for women- so that it is not hidden by the shoulder cloth."
(22) Hofmeyer, W., 1925, p 345/346
[177 797] (23) This is the case I have observed; the Shilluk who comes under the influence of missions or who was converted to Christianity uses European shorts and shirts, and the Shilluk who was converted to Islam wears the usual Arab white dress, with a turban.
(24) Hofmeyer, W., 1925. p 59
(25) Butt, A., The Nilotes of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Uganda, London 1925. p. 50
(26) Ibid, p 50
[171] (27) There is a similar ceremony among the Fung of investing the new chiefs with a head dress.

644 836 lover is any less hard. In place of a recognised tribal fine or compensation he is now a victim of blackmail. The *nyireth* whom he is living with proceeds as follows 'Give me a cow or I will tell.' This may go on until the lover's capital is exhausted and the *nyireth* with her child or children moves off in search of further prey. The lover has no redress as the whole arrangement is outside tribal custom, and the *nyireth* prospers from her blackmail and promiscuity.[1]

614 644 684 836 671 I do not propose to discuss here the reasons for the bar against marriage or sexual intercourse with the daughters of reigning or former *reths*. I have sometimes heard Shilluk say that compensation for illicit intercourse with any woman of the royal clan should really go to the *reth*. There is, however, an obvious distinction between offences committed with daughters of *reths* and with other females of the royal clan. In the first case, all forms of sexual union are barred and any infringement of the rule is a crime against the *reth* himself and all he stands for. Moreover female *nyireths*, not being allowed to marry, are in a sense males. Hence sexual relationship with them by a male amounts to perversity and perversity is not a mere private delict but a spiritual offence likely to react upon society as a whole. Shilluk say that theoretically the *nyireth* and her lover should be put to death, but the offence is now compoundable by payment of a fine. The principles of punishment and expiation are involved, not merely restitution. In the case of all other female *kwareth*, the offence lies not in the fact of sexual relationship, but in an illicit relationship amounting to an infringement of rights which apply to all members of Shilluk society. The wrongdoer pays the
[643] indemnity in order to right that wrong. In accepting compensation for offences against other women of the royal clan the *reth* is acting as the recognized head of that clan and has a right to receive and redistribute (which in fact he usually does) the wealth which belongs to the clan collectively. The former is therefore more nearly a criminal or public offence, the sanctions being penal, while the latter is a private delict involving the restitutory sanction only. It is worth noting that a closer study of this subject might well lead to a clearer picture of the spiritual functions of the
[121] *reth* himself and through him of the royal clan, and also to a more reliable interpretation of his legal functions.

CONCLUSION

171 58 We may conclude by noting that Shilluk marriages have not the complexity, found both in the social processes and the transfer and distribution of bridewealth, which characterizes unions among their Nuer and Dinka neighbours. The principles are, however, comparable. Marriage is achieved by the performance of ceremonies which have both social and ritual aspects. Side by side with these ceremonies is the payment of bridewealth in cattle, goats, sheep, and sometimes cash. Neither is complete without the other and, generally speaking, each stage in the ceremonies is accompanied by further payments of cattle. The *mogho thiek*, the ultimate ceremony of marriage which corresponds approximately to the Nuer *ruot* and the Dinka *thok de thiek*, at any rate in its legal implications, will not be performed unless sufficient cattle have already been paid to satisfy the kinsmen of the bride. Conversely, the payment of cattle would not legalize the union without the accompanying ceremonies.

---

[1] W. P. G. Thomson: unpublished records, 1946.

121 which largely concern social structure and kinship systems, are to be published later.
In this article I have attempted to set down the evidence, often conflicting, concerning
the secular and legal functions of the *reth* or king and, since these are relevant, the
Shilluk laws of homicide. Professor Evans-Pritchard points out ' if we are to under-
114 stand the place of the kingship in Shilluk society we must, I think, beware of attempts
to define it in terms of judicial and administrative functions and view it rather as a
643 ritual office and in a wider political context '.[1] There are in fact two opposing views.
On the one hand are those who consider that the *reth* was the head of a highly-
organized administration with a hierarchy of appointed chiefs; that he had absolute
powers of adjudication and execution; that he exacted tribute from his people; that
he imposed fines upon them for offences against the State. On the other hand are those
who hold the opinion that the *reth* had no extensive secular functions of a political or
administrative nature, but only a supreme ritual function to perform as the central
symbol of the moral and natural order. That the political homogeneity of the Shilluk
and the national characteristics of their political structure are maintained by the
institution of the *reth* is not to be denied. An analysis of Shilluk political structure, of
[171] the segments themselves and of their latent opposition, reveals many forms which
closely resemble similar segments in Nuer and Dinka society. The existence of the
reth gives meaning and co-ordination to the segments of Shilluk society which would
otherwise lack political cohesion. But how far are we justified in assuming that the
reth was an autocratic ruler who intervened in everyday affairs and imposed his
authority on his people?

CHARACTERISTICS OF SHILLUK SOCIETY

101 The Shilluk are a Nilotic tribe who occupy a narrow strip of country mainly along
[131] the west bank of the Nile from Tonga to approximately Lat. 11° N. They are clearly
of the same basic stock as the Nuer and Dinka, but have closer affinities with the
peoples classified as Shilluk-speaking, i.e. the Anuak, who live along the Baro and
Pibor rivers on the frontier of the Sudan and Ethiopia, the Acholi, Lango, Alur,
Jopadola, Jaluo,[2] who live as far south as the north-eastern shores of Lake Victoria,
[197] and small groups living in the area of the upper waters of the Bahr el Ghazal.
Their mythology suggests a common origin and their language is closely allied.

173 According to tradition the Shilluk migrated from the south through the Bahr el
Ghazal into their present country under the leadership of Nyikang, their culture
hero and the founder of the present dynasty of Shilluk kings. They conquered and
subsequently mixed with the original inhabitants (about whom we know little except
that they were probably not a Nilotic people) and extended their territory by raids
and infiltration considerably farther north than their present boundaries. Tradition,
supported by tribes other than the Shilluk and by Arab tribes living farther north,
indicates that Shilluk country once extended as far north as Khartoum.

105 The Shilluk are now a sedentary people and have nothing approaching the large-
scale dry-season migration of the Dinka and Nuer in search of green pasture. Their
361 permanent villages, built on the high ground close to the Nile, are occupied all the

---

[1] Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., p. 13.

[2] See, for example, Driberg, *The Lango*; Northcote, 'The Nilotic Kavirondo', *J.R.A.I.*, 1907; Evans-Pritchard, 'Luo Tribes and clans', *Rhodes-Livingstone Journal*, no. vii.

105 [361] year round and only the youths go to the cattle camps in the riverain pastures, which are never more than a few miles from their villages. The Shilluk are not a pastoral people in the sense that the Nuer and Dinka are, and rely to a much greater extent on agricultural products and on fish, for they are skilled and experienced fishermen. Since their migration to their present territory, it is probable that they have never had a very large cattle population, for their riverain pasture is not extensive.[1]

614 Shilluk clans[2] are not territorial in basis for they are highly segmented and widely distributed throughout the settlements of Shilluk country; as corporate units they have no real significance except at times of national festivals, and then only in the sphere of ritual and ceremony.

The Shilluk are divided into four main classes or groups of clans:

565 614 (i) The *kwareth*: the royal house, who trace descent from Nyikang and from whom the *reth* of the Shilluk is chosen.

644 [558] (ii) The *ororo*: a disinherited branch of the royal house who do not differ from commoners except in the special functions they perform at the installation of the *reth*, during his lifetime, and at his death. They are a distinct exogamous clan, though they may intermarry with the *kwareth* despite common ancestry.

(iii) The *collo*: the name refers collectively to the main body of the Shilluk clans of which a large number trace descent patrilineally from (*a*) the original followers of Nyikang, (*b*) individuals of other tribes who have migrated and settled in Shilluk country from early times onwards, and (*c*) ancestors who are lost in antiquity, but who may have occupied Shilluk country before the arrival of Nyikang.

[567] (iv) The *bang reth*: the personal attendants of the *reth*, his wives or wives of past *reths*; the descendants of royal slaves obtained by capture; those who volunteer to [792 735] serve him by reason of their possession by the spirit of Nyikang,[3] and paupers who volunteer for this form of service in order to exist at all. Finally, there are the alleged descendants of those who were enslaved because their close kinsmen committed homicide, though this statement must be examined more critically later.

[564 582] There are no real caste distinctions between *kwareth*, *ororo*, *collo*, and *bang reth* and, apart from restrictions on the marriages of daughters of a living or past *reth*, they intermarry freely. The *kwareth*, however, by reason of their connexion with Nyikang [554] and subsequent *reths*, are treated with special respect and this extends to those *bang reth* who have close association with the shrines of Nyikang or of dead kings. The Shilluk basic social structure is very similar to that of the Nuer and Dinka, though 171 there are important differences. The segmentation of the population into territorial units and of the clans into localized lineages has, however, a greater permanency and 643 stability. The distinctive feature of the Shilluk political structure is the existence of an established and theoretically omnipotent monarchy and it is in the political sphere

---

[161 233] [1] An accurate census taken during the veterinary campaign against trypanosomiasis gives a figure of 25,000. This was after a very severe epidemic in 1946 and it may be assumed that they had lost at least 30 per cent. of their stock. A human census, accurate at any rate within 15 per cent., gives a population figure of 110,000. The ratio of human population to cattle population is therefore between 1:0·3 and 1:0·25. Cf. Nuer where highest ratio given is 1:2·5 and the lowest 1:1·2.

[2] *kwa*: Literally 'descendants of', prefixing the name of the clan. '*kwa* Okelo'—the descendants of Okelo—and so on.

[3] Often now attendants at the many shrines of Nyikang.

that the most definite contrasts may be found. Whether this established and institu- 171
tionalized monarchy is the result of diffusion from elsewhere, a legacy from ancient 643
Egypt,[1] or the result of spontaneous development from the politico-religious function-
aries who exist in embryo form among other Shilluk-speaking[2] and, indeed, other
Nilotic peoples, is a controversial subject which I do not propose to discuss here.

Territorially, Shilluk country is divided into two provinces, within which are the 631
northern and southern provinces of Muomo and Tung, eleven divisions, and finally
each division into a number of settlements which are referred to as *podh*.[3] The settle- 621
ment is the largest political unit which has a permanent and stable function in Shilluk
society today.[4] The members occupy a common and clearly defined territory, have a
common grazing and fishing area held collectively, a common name, and a com-
mon system of age-set nomenclature.[5] Within each settlement are a number of 613
villages or hamlets, each of which, with its offshoots, is occupied by a distinct kin-
ship group, the local lineage of one of the main Shilluk clans. One of these lineages 621
is usually dominant and, though it does not give its name to the settlement, its leader
is generally recognized as holding some authority over the rest of the community.
In each settlement there are also usually representative lineages of *kwareth* who some-
times, but not always, have assumed a position of dominance within that settlement,
usually by force of numbers. There are also *bang reth* living in close association with
kwareth or tending one or more of the numerous royal shrines.[6]

There are frequent movements and migrations, both of individuals and of small 166
domestic groups. The persons who thus take up residence in other parts of the
country retain links with kinsmen in their original home and these links continue for 602
a period. The number of generations which pass before they are forgotten is indeter- 624
minate and variable, but the factor of territorial association is an important one. 571
Lineages of one clan living in one area are likely to retain these links and remain
bound by rules of exogamy however far removed they may be in the kinship structure.
Moreover, common residence in one village area or even one settlement may create
bonds which are equal in strength to kinship ties and may even carry with it a bar to
intermarriage. In such circumstances there is usually the fiction of common descent
through the female line. Among the Shilluk there is a bar to marriage with close 582
relatives on the maternal side carried to three or four generations, but common
residence sometimes creates a more permanent prohibition.

---

[1] See Seligman, C. G., *Egypt and Negro Africa*. George Routledge & Sons, 1934, p. 60.

[2] For example, the Anuak nobles; see Evans-Pritchard, *The Political System of the Anuak of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, Monographs on Social Anthropology, London School of Economics, 1940; and Driberg, J. H., *The Lango*.

[3] *podh*. A more elastic and relative term than I had realized when writing an article on this subject in 1937. *podh* simply means 'home' or 'homeland' and Shilluk refer to *podh collo*: 'Shillukland'. The word itself has the same relativity as the Nuer word *cieng* and the Dinka word *wut*.

[4] There have, of course, been changes of boundaries and processes of fission and fusion characteristic of any segmentary society. The nature of the terrain in Shilluk country, however, precludes any great
change. The limitations of high ground, with clear- 133
cut watercourses as boundaries, together with 182
associated economic interests, tend to stabilize com- 631
munities.

[5] This is a significant fact and one which throws 101
much light on the true nature of the Shilluk *podh*.
When we compare other Nilotic tribes we find that 561
age-set nomenclature is common to whole tribes, but does not extend beyond tribal boundaries (Nuer) or, like the Shilluk, is limited to smaller segments of society (Ngork Dinka).

[6] Lineages of the *kwareth* are referred to by the name of the *reth*, *nyireth* (son of a *reth*), or *nyinyireth* (grandson of a *reth*) who founded them. Thus *kwareth* Fadiet, *kwanyireth* Adung, &c. Similarly, *bang reth* are distinguished as *bang reth* Fadiet, *bang nyireth* Adung, &c.

643 776 The all-powerful being who exists in the minds of the Shilluk as a remote and amoral deity is called Juok. The principal medium through whom Juok is approached is Nyikang, but the distinction between them is not well defined. 'Nyikang is Juok but Juok is not Nyikang'[1] for Nyikang is also a mythological figure who takes his place in Shilluk history as the culture-hero of the Shilluk people,[2] the founder of the royal house; as the soul of Nyikang is reincarnate in every Shilluk *reth*, he thus exists both in the past and in the present. Nyikang is the *reth*: the *reth* is Nyikang. This paradox of the unity yet separation of the three is not easy to define and the Shilluk would find it difficult to explain. Juok, Nyikang, and the ruling *reth* represent the line through which divinity runs, a conception which is similar to the ancestor cult, but the cult is associated with the tribe as a whole rather than with the royal clan (*kwareth*) or any other more restricted kinship group. The *reth* is himself the medium through whom both Nyikang and, more vaguely, Juok are approached and is the human intercessor for mankind with God. Voluntarily by ritual acts, involuntarily by reason of his very existence, the *reth* affects the fortunes and fertility of the tribe and controls the natural phenomena which react upon crops and cattle. The *reth* is therefore the central figure of tribal religion as well as the symbol of political unity. He is responsible for the welfare and fortunes of the people both spiritually, as the present manifestation of Nyikang, and temporally, but less clearly, as the leading tribal authority. 'The Shilluk would not seriously dispute the *reth*'s divine attributes (unless a follower of some alien religion),[3] though some might resist his more mundane powers.'[4]

The Problem of Authority

177 643 648 The extent of the *reth*'s authority is naturally of considerable importance to an analysis of Shilluk law and legal procedures, especially in the past, and an answer must be attempted even though the evidence is scanty and it is now probably too late to obtain more. The first factor of great importance in this discussion is historical, for the Shilluk have not been entirely free of alien government since 1867 and external influences prior to that date, so that, whatever the political authority of the *reth* may have been previously, since then it has been influenced by external forces. Moreover, not only the present Government, but also the Turco-Egyptian administration, appear to have attempted a rudimentary form of what in Africa has been called 'Indirect Rule', through the agency of the *reth*. However unsuccessful this may have been, it must have increased the powers of the *reth* to some extent and given to him an authority which in the past he may well not have possessed. This argument is not, I think, affected by the fact that so many *reths* suffered sudden death or exile at the hands of their own people or the Turks; but it is significant that during the Turkish régime the position of the *reth* was nearly always insecure. He was at any time liable to be ambushed and killed by an ambitious *nyireth*[5] who hoped to gain the support of the Shilluk people and supplant him as reigning monarch. This potential opposition

---

[1] Howell and Thomson, op. cit., p. 8.

[2] The meaning of Nyikang in Shilluk society will not be discussed here in detail. There is considerable literature on the subject which is listed in the Bibliography.

[3] The Dinka cult of Deng has sometimes found favour with certain Shilluk individuals and as such is subversive of the status of the *reth*, though it has never provided a serious threat.

[4] Howell and Thomson, op. cit., p. 9.

[5] Son of a *reth* who has reigned and therefore a claimant to the throne. See Howell and Thomson, op. cit., p. 11, and Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

is in accordance with Shilluk tradition, but the kings prior to this period appear to 177 have had a stability of tenure unknown during the latter half of the nineteenth century.[1] 640 The opposition sprang from resentment of an excessive and often oppressive 643 use of the powers accorded to him and also from a reaction to the interference of an alien government, for many of the *reths* of that period were no more than puppets. 175

reth Kwathker, who was the *reth* of the Shilluk at the time of the first arrival of the 643 Turkish 'Mudir' at Fashoda, was deposed and replaced by a nominee called Ajang Nyidhok, who was never accepted by the southern Shilluk.[2] A civil war between the 648 north and the Government on one side supporting Ajang, and the south supporting Kwathker followed. The south was defeated, and Kwathker died in chains at Fashoda.[3] Ajang was himself deposed shortly afterwards and the Turks attempted to administer the Shilluk without a *reth* at all. This policy was, however, entirely unsuccessful and, after a clash which resulted in a massacre of Government troops at Kaka in 1875, Kweikon, son of Kwathker, was installed as *reth*. A few years later Kweikon joined the Turkish troops in their attack on the forces of the Mahdi at Jebel Gadir. The Turkish and Shilluk forces were annihilated and Kweikon was killed. Subsequently, after a period of interregnum, Yor, son of *reth* Akoc, who had visited the Mahdi and received his support, installed himself at Fashoda. The support of the *Mahdia*, however, did not continue under the régime of the Khalifa Abdullahi, and Yor was finally captured and beheaded by the Emir Zeki Tumal near Tonga. His successor was Kur, another son of *reth* Nyidhok, who was a Mahdist puppet and called by them Abdel Fadil. During Kur's absence in Omdurman, Akol, a son of Kwathker, supported by the southern Shilluk attempted a *coup d'état*, but was unsuccessful owing to the intervention of the northern Shilluk. The present Government arrived in 1898, and Kur remained in power until 1903, when he was deposed for 'unjust and oppressive' actions against his people. He was replaced by Fadiet, a Government nominee, who died in 1917. After a show of opposition by the southern Shilluk, who supported Coti, son of *reth* Ajang, Fafiti, son of Yor, was finally installed at Fashoda in 1917 and ruled until 1943. He was followed in quick succession by Anei wad Kur, who died less than two years after his installation, and Dak wad Fadiet, who died in 1951. The present *reth*-elect, not yet formally installed, is Kur wad Fafiti.

Throughout this period, administration was carried out through the agency of the *reth*, although there were frequent attempts to increase the authority of local chiefs, formed into Chiefs' Courts. It may be noted also that there were occasional attempts [669] to oust Fafiti in favour of rivals, the most notable of whom was Nyawelo wad Kur who was exiled in 1932. These attempts were, however, severely suppressed by the Government and it is impossible even to guess whether they would have been successful, if the reigning *reth* had not enjoyed an artificial stability of tenure provided by the Government. During this period the policy of the Government was to establish 175 tribunals throughout the country from which final appeal lay to the *reth* himself. The extent of the jurisdiction of these tribunals has varied considerably from time to time, 631 the boundaries being altered, for administrative convenience, to approximate to the 648

---

[1] See Hofmayr, *Die Schilluk*, 1925, and also Westermann, *The Shilluk People*, 1912, on traditions about the early *reths*.

[2] Howell and Thomson, op. cit., p. 75, i.e. those living in Luak. The division into Luak and Gerr has had not only ritual but political significance.

[3] Kodok—Turkish Province Headquarters and called by them Fashoda. Fashoda is in fact the capital of the *reth* and lies some fifteen miles south of Kodok.

175 traditional divisions of Shilluk country. From the early years of administration, with
631 frequent minor adjustments, until 1949 these divisions were eleven in number,[1] but
648 they were recently amalgamated to form five.

These historical factors have been summarized here to show how difficult it is to
● 643 formulate definite conclusions on the *reth*'s political authority. According to tradition and to what the Shilluk will often themselves say, he has absolute powers of intervention to suppress public disturbances, to give judgement in certain disputes and, moreover, to execute those judgements. In fact, in recent years, and possibly at times during the latter half of the nineteenth century, this theoretical authority has had the
[177 backing of an alien government and may for this reason have been exaggerated
648] beyond what was actually enforceable in earlier times. There is, therefore, throughout Shilluk history in the last hundred years a divergence of theory and fact, and one does not know how much of the theory has been created by external influences. It will be realized that this problem is also of some importance in a theoretical study of primi-
[671] tive legal systems, for we wish to know whether the laws were, in fact, enforceable, whether the Shilluk monarchy, apart from external influences, represents ' politically organized society, ', and whether certain laws were enforced and legal sanctions applied in such a manner as to justify the use of the term ' public law '.

648 There is little evidence of legal procedures during the Turkish régime and none during the *Mahdia*. Schweinfurth writing, in 1868, a lucid account of a Shilluk dispute
692 heard by the Turkish ' Mudir ' or Governor at Fashoda, says: ' He (the Mudir) was continually being called upon to adjust the disputes of natives, who appealed to his judgement even in their most private concerns. . . .' After describing the unsuccessful plea of a Shilluk girl for permission to marry her lover who had not enough cattle to pay the bridewealth, he adds, ' This was not a very comforting decision, but it showed me plainly how that it was ever his rule to recognize the customs of the country'.[2] Schweinfurth also gives a vivid picture of the Shilluk king at this period.

> 643 In the Mudir's verandah I also made acquaintance with a Shillook chief, who had entirely surrendered to the Egyptian Government, and was now, as the Governor expressed himself,
> 648 ' coming to his senses.' There was no external indication whatever of his rank. . . . He retained now but a shadow of his former power; his better days were gone, days in which, attended by a council of ancestral state, he had swayed the sceptre of patriarchal dignity. Of all the negro races which occupy the entire district of the Nile, the Shillooks used to uphold the most perfectly regulated government. . . . But now this condition is all changed, and everything has disappeared which gave this independent and primitive people their most striking characteristics.[3]

631 There are, of course, other references to the indigenous administration of the Shilluk based on the division of the country into provinces and settlements with a
643 representative of the *reth* in charge of each, and the *reth* himself as the ultimate authority. Many writers therefore assume that there existed a highly organized system; more highly organized than the evidence warrants. It is natural that the present

---

[1] See Howell and Thomson, op. cit., p. 6.

[2] Schweinfurth, G., *The Heart of Africa*, London, 1878.

[3] Schweinfurth, op. cit., p. 19. He is here referring to the Turkish puppet Ajang wad Nyidhok. He mentions later that 'Kasgar' (presumably Kwathker), another descendant of the ancient reigning family, still maintained himself as an 'uncontrolled sovereign' in the southern part of the Shilluk country.

Government, with periodic modifications, has utilized existing divisions of the [631] country as administrative units, and has drawn its agents from the dominant lineages of each, thus creating a hierarchy of chiefs responsible to the *reth* himself; but this is 643 not necessarily evidence that such a system was a reality in the past. On this subject Pumphrey expresses the opinion that, 'The power of the *Reths* before the Turkish interference was undoubtedly great. It was based partly on the semi-divinity with which tribal tradition clothes them and partly upon their great wealth in cattle and slaves. Justice was probably rough and large-scale fighting more prevalent than litigation, [692] such law-suits as there were being seen, as previously mentioned, either by the settlement chief or by the *Reth* at Fashoda.' He adds in a footnote that 'The *Reth* is said to have had the enviable privilege of killing a tiresome litigant with a club.'[1] In an unpublished record Pumphrey goes farther than this and says:

> I do not think it is true to say that as far back as Shilluk tradition goes, there is a system of 631 administration and Courts with the *reth* at the head of it and powers descending through the heads of provinces, whom we call Court Chiefs, to heads of sections down to the 692 village headman. . . . Naturally as one Chief or another attained to local prestige, he would 642 tend to attract cases to him, and certainly for a period the princesses of Dettim used to see local cases. There were, however, only four regular offices under the *reth*. The Chiefs of Luak and Gerr lived on either side of Fashoda and were his right-hand men. The Chiefs of Muomo and Tonga were chiefs of the marches whose definite job it was to keep a look out for invading enemies. Apart from this, however, the Chiefs of the marches were also the *reth*'s representatives in the two extremes of the country and used both to see cases themselves and send along to Fashoda those cases which they thought the *reth* should see. Beneath these four officials were the Chiefs (*jyak*) i.e. holders of the *lau*.[2] Our present [177] 'Section Chiefs' are only *some* of them *lau* holders, for the reason that 'sections' (occasionally somewhat arbitrarily formed) contain usually several original villages and each village has a *lau* (by an 'original village' I mean the parent village of a group of off shoots of villages). It was through these *jyak* and through these four senior officials that the Shilluk country used to be ruled. The *reth* did not tour much, but had the people sent to him at 643 Fashoda. If a killing occurred, the offending lineage would have to produce a girl and a boy. 682 The girl would be handed to the brother (or near relative) of the dead man and the boy 692 would go to be slave to the *reth*. If the case was not settled, or if one village went to fight with another one without sufficient cause, the *reth* would send his army (*tick*) to take all the cattle from the offending village, or, if necessary burn their villages. This army would consist of one or more of the adjacent villages, its strength depending on the amount of potential resistance. Any number of sections could be raised and it seems that the sections so instructed were glad to go, since the *reth*'s army was seldom, if ever, opposed and consequently there was little bloodshed, but a certain amount of booty.[3]

Pumphrey's opinions may seem somewhat contradictory, but it is clear that he [114] thinks there was no highly efficient State system with an all-powerful *reth* at the head.

Evans-Pritchard points out that: 631

> it is unlikely that the so-called 'provinces' were in fact more than districts or that they 642 were in any sense administrative departments before they were made into something of the kind by foreign governments. Moreover, though doubtless the king exercised considerable influence in the country and may have confirmed settlement chiefs in office, he did not

---

[1] Pumphrey, op. cit., p. 19.

[2] *lau*, robe of office given by the *reth*.

[3] Pumphrey: Unpublished records. Undated: *circa* 1936.

> 701 have no value in defence.[1] The *bany* is the symbol of this aggressive spirit. The *bany* himself
> is frequently an elderly man, and not a 'fire-brand' and his functions are passive. He is
> 578 appointed, just like any other Chief, and when his people go to war he is carried as a mascot
> 624 on a bed. He takes no active part and, like most Shilluk institutions of a seditious nature,
> the *bany*, like the *nyireth*, is powerless in himself and depends on public support.
>
> On this occasion Nyigir settlement appointed a *bany* and the Chief failed to report the
> 578 matter to the *reth*, or to the District Commissioner. A few days later Nyigir carried their
> 701 *bany* into Golbainy, the neighbouring settlement to the north, and behaved in an aggressive
> manner, singing and carrying their shields. This challenging demonstration was reported in
> Fashoda settlement next day, though the royal capital was avoided. The *reth* himself, hearing
> singing of which he had not been notified personally, intervened between Nyigir, lined up
> [643] on their border and carrying their *bany*, and Fashoda who were mobilizing to defend
> themselves . . . An old feud exists between Nyigir and Fashoda. In the time of *reth* Nyidhok
> (*circa* 1840) Nyigir attacked and burned the Royal Village of Fashoda. In 1917 Nyigir killed
> a Government policeman and assistance had to be obtained from Malakal and Tewfikia
> (where the mounted police had recently gone from Kodok). Nyigir is the largest Shilluk
> section, and has a strong element of intractable *kwareth*, all closely related and descendants
> of *reth* Awin, who, I know from experience, are hard to control. As far as I can judge this
> was not a seditious movement against the *reth* himself, but a major fight round Fashoda
> might have led to anything.[2]

578 I have quoted this incident, as it is recorded, not as evidence of subversive action
against the person of the *reth*, or any threat to depose him, but because it is clear that
643 the *reth* is concerned, even had the incident been farther removed than his own capital,
in maintaining peaceful relations between the settlements. Further, the incident is
typical of the hostilities which have so frequently occurred and been sustained for
long periods. Referring to *reth* Fadiet's time (1903–17) Hofmayr says:

> 175 There was a great fight between Owaci and Tworo. Banholzer relates: 'A man from
> Owaci had been bewitched in Tworo and was kept in a village. They asked him how many
> 628 men had been killed in the last fighting, but he refused to answer. Thereupon he was murdered
> and his body thrown into the river and anchored by wooden pegs, but the body broke away
> and floated downstream. The people of Owaci got to hear of it and caused the great fight
> in which many Tworo people were killed. The survivors fled to the other bank of the
> river and until now the Tworo people say they are allowed to kill Owaci people as the price
> of blood.'[3]

This feud, referred to by Hofmayr in 1905, is of particular interest because there are
accurate records of its continuance later. For example, between the years 1931 and
1932 there were thirteen incidents of clashes and several of homicide, and during
this period twenty-seven men of Thworo and nineteen of Owaci were killed and
larger numbers were wounded. The feud was finally settled in 1932 by a peace cere-
[643] mony performed by the *reth* which will be described later.

These feuds, and in particular the feuds between Owaci and Thworo, have been
628 mentioned because they show a persistence which does not seem characteristic of
feuds among the Nuer and the Dinka, and also because casualties were very numerous.

[1] The meaning of this statement is not clear. If there is aggression there must presumably also be defence.

[2] Thomson, W. P. G., unpublished Government Records.

[3] Hofmayr, op. cit.

669 described as feuds, for they amount to civil war; the latter are usually so quickly 621 composed that the feud is soon over. The ultimate aim of the first is successful deposition of the monarch by one side or his retention by the other, and there is evidence [631] of a traditional, almost institutionalized, opposition between the north and south.[1] In the latter form of hostilities the desire for peaceful composition after an outbreak of violence or an act of homicide was presumably fostered by expediency, for within so compact and densely populated a territorial unit the continuance of a feud would be intolerable.[2] Local lineages within a settlement are sufficiently united by common interests in economic activities, by marital ties, and above all in common defence against aggression from other settlements, that these sanctions were, and indeed still are, particularly effective. These distinctions are important, for not only are feuds [628 between adjacent settlements often fiercely sustained, as we have seen, but it is at this level of internal disruption that the intervention of the *reth* is most obvious, if we are •643] to accept the evidence of recorded instances. This is true whether we take the view that in the past, before Government influences were effective, the king's intervention took the form of arbitration demanded by the participants, or whether we take the opposite view that he took repressive or even legal action as the head of an organized State.

In the case of civil war over the tenure of the monarchy itself, the *reth* was the leading participant defending his personal position against a rival. Action against him was *ultra vires*, though this was no longer true as soon as his rival was established on the throne. In the case of hostilities within a settlement, the sanctions were probably [626] sufficiently forceful to secure amicable composition without either external arbitration or repression. We must, therefore, consider homicide in the context of inter-settlement feuds in which, as we shall see, the *reth* was more particularly involved in the rôle of peacemaker. It will then be necessary to consider the more individual aspects of the laws of homicide.

The Reth's *Rôle in the Composition of Inter-settlement Feuds*

643 On this subject the Seligmans say:

> 682 As the fountain of justice, the king kept for himself by far the greater part of the fines for homicide and other grave offences. The fine for man-killing was usually ten head of cattle, 692 but sometimes more was levied; a girl might be taken in lieu of the cattle, when the king would allow the girl to marry, but would keep the bridewealth; or a girl and a boy might be kept as hostages by the king until the cattle were paid. The king might give one head of cattle to the family of the deceased as compensation; this, however, did not always settle the matter, and a blood feud might start and be continued until the balance of dead was even, often not only families but whole villages becoming involved.[3]

---

the Ngork Dinka at any rate are in this respect closer to the Shilluk than to the Nuer.

[1] See Evans-Pritchard, op. cit., p. 29.

[2] Latent hostility between kinship groups *within* [621] a settlement sometimes prevailed. I recently drove with the *jago* of Ogod *Par* from his home in the extreme south of that settlement to his northern boundaries. He insisted that I should drive him back, presumably because he preferred the comfort of a motor-car to his own feet, but he gave as a reason that his people were at feud with the *kwa* Oman lineage lying just to the north of his own village (an act of homicide had occurred two years before). It may be noted, however, that the villages of these *kwa* Oman are set in Ogod *Butu* which is, in a sense, a separate settlement territorially but not politically within the boundaries of Ogod *Par*. It is doubtful whether a feud between these people would be long sustained.

[3] *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*, p. 46. The authors make no reference to the evidence from which these deductions were made. It must be remembered that Seligman supported the view that the king had absolute power. 'In the old days his word was law....' *The Cult of Nyakang and the Divine Kings of the Shilluk*, Welcome Report, 1911.

There are also scattered references by Hofmayr, who writes:

> When the number of dead and wounded is equal on both sides, they stop fighting; then the king will hold a Court and punish the party who is in the wrong. . . . In the case of mortal wounds, the penalty is an ox. In the case of deaths, ten head of cattle have to be paid and formerly a maiden instead of the cattle. This heavy fine is paid to the king who in return would give two or three oxen to the family of the deceased for the mourning dance. 643 692 682

Later, talking of the reign of *reth* Kur, he says:

> Two villages, Bol and Pabur, were fighting over a beautiful maiden. There was much blood shed on both sides. The king went to Pabur and at night time he occupied the village. Next morning he sat in Court and took all the ornaments and cattle away from the village, even the clothes of the village. As he favoured Bol, he never did anything there.[1]

Westermann, whose information is least reliable, states that: [114]

> Murder cases were tried by a court of chiefs and the king. If a man was condemned, he was disgraced in many ways before the people. Sometimes he was led about the village with a cow-rope around his neck, and then executed by hanging. If a man was executed on account of a crime, his whole family and everything he possessed became the property of the king.[2]

and also that:

> In the case of certain infractions of the law the convict became the slave of the king, and could no more return to his home. These slaves are known as *tyen oruk* (' men of crime ') or *adiro* [' slaves ' of the Royal Household]. [567]

Apart from a description of a peace ceremony performed by the *reth* published by the Reverend D. S. Oyler, which will be discussed later, there are few references in published literature to homicide and the settlement of blood-feuds among the Shilluk. Naturally enough, administrative records contain frequent references to the subject because the Administration has been much concerned with the matter. Pumphrey, who was perhaps best qualified to weigh the evidence, unfortunately does not describe the procedures in detail nor record actual instances. 114

A full description of a peace ceremony between the warring settlements of Owaci and Thworo already mentioned was recorded in the Shilluk District files by Major G. W. Titherington in 1932. He writes as follows: 643 628

> A peace ceremony was celebrated by the *reth* of the Shilluk between the sections of Owaci and Thworo on their traditional battle-ground on 2-3-32.
>
> This feud is the most bitter and bloody of modern times and in about twenty years probably some fifty casualties have occurred in fighting and by retaliatory murder, and the numerous attempts to stop it have failed. Peace had been in the air since the Shilluk Chiefs' meeting in January, and, all preliminaries having been agreed to, the *reth* arrived to stay with the local Chief on February 29th. He saw all Chiefs and Headmen concerned on March 1st and 2nd. He then went to Thworo where the Court Chief brought a guard of about one hundred spears. These were in formation and fully armed, but in undress and without shields. The four Thworo companies took about an hour and a half to get assembled. There were about five hundred men on parade and (by then) all fully equipped, drums and kudu horns were in full blast and everyone in a muck sweat and vast excitement. The *reth* addressed them briefly and they replied that they wanted peace. He got them on the move,

---

[1] Hofmayr, op. cit.

[2] Westermann, *The Shilluk People*, 1912, p. xlvii.

628 led by the guard, and then motored on to Owaci who were similarly started off, about eight hundred strong, also in four companies.

643 There was a large assembly uniting at the meeting place, with three bullocks and four sheep for sacrifice. These were provided by the *reth* and the two factions.

[631] Two neutral Chiefs had previously been told off to lead the factions to the meeting place which had been marked. This is important because experience has shown[1] that left to themselves the two factions will sit down about two hundred yards apart and then the memory of stolen cattle or a murdered brother will be too much for someone's self-control resulting in a flow of martial oratory. This will lead some young blood to dash forward and hurl spears or insults and there follows retaliation. If they can be got to move up close together without pause, it is obvious that the consequences of any hostilities will be so serious that anyone trying to start anything will instantly be suppressed by his wiser brethren in arms.

Both factions were finally got to sit down close up to the line and to put their shields on the ground as a sign of mutual confidence. The *reth* walked among them and briefly addressed them and they answered that they wanted peace. He was rather an impressive figure and seemed to have the situation under confident control. Some concerted hand-clapping was taken as a good sign by the public.

[782] The *reth*'s bullock was then led between one faction and the guard, thrown on its back, held by men of both factions, speared by men of both factions and had its throat cut.[2] Next, a procession of neutrals was formed who took hand-fulls of the stomach contents and marched round throwing it at the factions. The next item caused most interest among the public. Thworo got up, marched round the guard and sat down touching Owaci who had the good manners to remain seated. Owaci's bull and sheep were led up, but put aside to be sacrificed at the shrine of Queen Abujok in Thworo next day. Thworo's bull was then led up and killed just as the *reth's* had been by persons with an active interest in the feud. [787] Lesser folk killed the sheep, one of which got up and managed to stagger a few steps under a rain of spear thrusts. This was considered a bad omen and one by-stander recalled the abortive peace between Faalo and Fanyidwai in 1926.[3]

[648] This cannot be quoted as evidence of the *reth*'s executive powers, for we know that he was accompanied by the District Commissioner on this occasion, but certain interesting facts emerge. In the first place, the attitude of opposition between the two groups is clearly stressed, though it is more than probable that at proceedings of this kind a display of hostile attitudes is demanded by convention. The author indicates that the *reth* busies himself with the actual organization of the ceremonies and certainly acts as arbitrator, visiting first one side and then the other. It is unfortunate that little mention is made of the ritual functions of the *reth*. In 1920 the Rev. D. S. [114] Oyler described a similar peace ceremony in the settlements of Maimom, Fakoi, Fatworo, and Falo[4] and his account of the procedure does not greatly differ from that of Titherington. He implies throughout that the desire for peace came from the participants and there is no suggestion that peace was forced upon them, even though the *Mamur*[5] was present. 'The people of this District', he says 'were tired of con-

---

[1] Titherington makes no reference to instances from which such experience derived. It must be assumed that some peace ceremonies failed from the start.

[2] Shilluk say that each man concerned should stab the sacrificial ox, which is then split (*agol*) and the two portions divided among the respective parties. This procedure is reminiscent of all ceremonies performed in Nilotic tribes for the restoration of peaceful relations.

[3] Unpublished District records by G. W. Titherington, at Malakal, dated 3.4.31.

[4] Oyler, the Rev. D. S. 'The Shilluk Peace Ceremony', *S.N.R.*, 1920.

[5] Sudanese (or more probably Egyptian) administrative officer.

tinual guerrilla warfare, and some of them were anxious to have the trouble finally 628 settled.' He adds, 'Each side was afraid to make the decision lest it appear weak'. 643

Oyler's account gives us a clearer picture of the ritual performed by the *reth* and also of his function in exhorting the people to make peace. There is nowhere any suggestion that he compels them to do so, he merely 'advises'. Much of this 'advice' [648] is tainted with statements which reflect the *reth*'s official capacity as Government agent. 'The king made a talk in which he pointed out that the colour of the animal to be killed had bits of both red and black. The red was for the blood that would be shed, should someone break the covenant, and the black was for the evil of such a course. . . . "We, the black people unite with the red (white) people of the Government to reconcile you".' Though much of the metaphorical aspects of this speech may have [114] derived from the Rev. D. S. Oyler himself, it is not, as a matter of fact, untypical of Shilluk speeches of this sort.[1] Later we hear that 'he (the *reth*) informed the people that the animal was a cow of Nyikang, descendant of a cow owned by Nyikang. The king added most seriously: "The flesh of this animal is my flesh, and its blood is the same as my blood. Great disaster will come on you, if you break the covenant, for you will be cursed by the blood."' Then, after considerable delay because no one was willing to take the responsibility of being first to spear the animal, men of both factions speared it to death and, as described also by Titherington, were pelted with the stomach contents.

One thing is striking. The orderly procedure described in these accounts bears little resemblance to the punitive expeditions carried out by the *reth* in order to suppress internal hostilities, and though this might be expected after thirty years of administration, it seems to me that the *reth*'s role as arbitrator is far more in accordance with his true functions in Shilluk society.

There are also references in District records to these punitive expeditions, but always without the evidence of actual instances. One hears of the 'custom of the *reth* of punishing a murderous or disobedient village by looting and destroying it. This he did either by sending a force of his own, if it was near Fashoda, or else, if it was a long way off, by sending orders to the Chief of the neighbouring village or section to do this. Such a force was apparently not resisted and there was no difficulty in finding it because there was sure to be a community with a feud against the guilty and also the *reth* only kept part of the loot. . . . This system seems to have survived 177 the *Turkia* and *Mahdia*, possibly because there was *nothing incompatible in it with* 628 *methods of those days*.'[2]

The author of this account might have added that much in the methods employed 643 may even have derived from Turkish example. The Turks were at pains to use the 648 *reth* as an administrative agent and doubtless encouraged such raids carried out in the name of justice and security. The author continues: 'However, these methods came to an abrupt end with the removal of *reth* Kur in 1903, the appointment by the Government of his aged successor *reth* Fadiet, and the rules laid down at the time.'

From scattered references of this nature we are not able to reach reliable conclusions 628 concerning the *reth*'s executive authority in the past in connexion with homicide and blood-feuds, whether actual or theoretical. There is certainly a strong tradition 643

---

[1] Cf. speeches made at the installation of *reth* Anei wad Kur. Howell & Thomson, op. cit., p. 71.

[2] 'A note on Customary Law', dated June [illegible] (unpublished). The italics are mine.

628 among the Shilluk that he was empowered to suppress internal feuds, that he actually did so with the assistance of an army of neutrals, and that, though the punishments 643 inflicted on the guilty sections of the community were severe and included seizure of property and the enslavement of the guilty parties, little resistance was shown. At the same time, there are few examples cited in Shilluk tradition which date back to days earlier than the first alien administration. Such methods resemble the methods [173 employed by those who were used as agents in Turkish times to maintain some kind 177] of order. They are also reminiscent of Arab procedures, and it must be remembered that the Shilluk were influenced by Arab contacts.[1] They are in keeping also with the methods employed during the *Mahdia*.

On the other hand, it is quite clear that the *reth* has always had recognized functions as an arbitrator in blood-feuds. These functions are both purely secular, in the attempt to reconcile warring factions, and ritual, in the removal of prohibitions raised in feuds.[2] It is more than probable that in early days the *reth* would take no action unless he was certain that the two parties wished for peace. In Titherington's account we hear that, 'The *reth* walked among them and briefly addressed them and they [264] answered that they wanted peace. . . . The taboo on the families at feud eating together, is removed by the *reth*.'[3]

Hofmayr says: 'When the number of the dead and wounded on both sides is equal, they stop fighting. The King will hold court and punish the offender who is in the wrong.' The idea that feuds cease when the participants are tired of fighting and of a perpetual state of insecurity is stressed again and again in reports. It is at this point that the *reth*'s intervention is accepted, and it seems to me doubtful whether he would normally intervene in any other circumstances.

Indemnity for Homicide

The present recognized indemnity for wilful homicide among the Shilluk is ten 682 head of cattle. There have been frequent attempts by the Administration during the 173 course of the last thirty years to raise this number, as a deterrent, but these attempts do not appear to have been either effective or generally accepted by the tribe. The [648] traditional number demanded is also in doubt. Thomson, in an unpublished report, says: 'In the past blood-money for a killing was ten head of cattle to the deceased's family and ten to the *reth*. Later it became ten to the deceased's family, five to the *reth* and five to the Government. It is now (since 1932) ten head of cattle to the family of the deceased only.' I have sometimes heard it said that in *reth* Fadiet's time (1903–17) it was only seven head,[4] but it was raised to twenty, of which the *reth* took half, by orders of *reth* Fafiti when he first succeeded to the throne. It is also said that in the old days a girl was sometimes handed over instead of cattle, and although [584] intermarriage between people at feud is considered wrong unless the full peace ceremonies have been completed, this girl was taken in marriage by one of the kinsmen of the dead man. If, by reason of some kinship relationship with the deceased, [608] she fell within the prohibited degrees of marriage, she would be accepted as a

---

[1] Cf. The Baggara *Khama*: خامة, whereby neutral tribal segments would band together to punish wrongdoers, seizing their possessions, which were handed over to the deceased's family.

[2] Such as the prohibition on eating together and on intermarriage.

[3] Titherington, unpublished records.

[4] Sometimes quoted as being current in *reth* Kur's time (deposed 1903) too.

171 628 [649 682] some of the beasts are sacrificed during the ceremonies and others are added to their personal herds. One must, therefore, beg the question whether those portions alleged to be the right of the *reth* were ritual fees of this nature rather than 'fines' as is so frequently stated. It is a question of interpretation, and I suggest that even though repressive action and the exaction of 'fines' may have occurred, with the backing of foreign Governments, during the latter half of the last century and the early years of the present Administration, the payments were ritual in origin and concerned the *reth*'s ritual function in society. The use of the word 'fine' appears to me to be inaccurate.

Ritual of Purification for Homicide

171 783 781 [782] As among other Nilotic peoples, a Shilluk who has killed another must perform certain rites to cleanse him from impurity which might otherwise affect his kinsmen. This process involves, first, the letting of blood, which is carried out by a magical expert (*ajwago*)[1] who makes a small incision on his right shoulder with a spear. This is known as *tai dhani*. Secondly, a small sacrifice is made (usually a sheep), the object of which is to remove the curse of the dead man's spirit. As among the Nuer and Dinka, the killer is not expected to eat or drink until this ritual has been performed.

Accidental Killing

682 [127] [114] Accidental killing (*agwey*) is apparently not regarded as a serious offence among the Shilluk, especially if the two parties are connected by kinship or by close association in one territory. Hofmayr says: 'Accidental killing requires only the sacrifice of an ox at a peace ceremony and no more.'[2] District records indicate that two head of cattle sometimes were paid. At the Shilluk Chiefs' Council in 1934 it is recorded that 'the Council do not know whether there is a definite law on this subject or not. The *reth* says that years ago it was two head of cattle, one to the relatives of the dead man, one to the *reth*. He himself suggests two head of cattle to go to the deceased's family. This is confirmed as law.' I do not think that any such fixed indemnity existed in the past, but that intention was recognized and accident accepted in mitigation of the offence. At any rate the indignation of the deceased's kinsmen would not be so acute, and they would be prepared to accept an indemnity less than that normally demanded for intentional homicide.

Bodily Injuries not causing Death

683 [171] [671 643] On the subject of bodily injuries less than death, the evidence is even less reliable than on homicide. It is evident that such injuries require the payment of compensation if retaliatory action is not to follow. At the same time it is perhaps surprising that among the Shilluk, unlike the Nuer and Dinka, there are no recognized injuries for which compensation is given on a definite scale. We hear that 'for injury' an immediate payment of one bull must be made as a guarantee of good faith. Subsequent settlement is made on a scale regulated by the severity of the ultimate damage and rising, in the case of blinding, to the same rate as for death. Apart from the problem of the *reth*'s intervention in matters of this sort, it may be assumed, in the absence of

---

amount to eight cattle out of a total of forty.

[1] *Ajwago*: Magical expert or specialist. These persons are not comparable to the Nuer functionaries, such as the *kwar kwar*, but to the possessors of spirits (*gwán kwoth*). *Ajwago* is a derivative of *Juok*, meaning God in Shilluk.

[2] Op. cit.

683

further evidence, that such offences were treated as private delicts in the past, though 671
nowadays, through the influence of the Government, penal sanctions may be applied. 643

Witchcraft

The Dinka and Nuer tell us that witches and other anti-social persons were some- 683
times dispatched by their victims or their kinsmen with the tacit consent of the
community. Acts of homicide against persons whose actions threatened the integrity 171
of the community were either not subject to restitutory sanctions at all, or the compensation demanded by their kinsmen was on a much reduced scale.[1] A similar attitude towards witches is to be found among the Shilluk, but again without the support of actual examples.

In the published literature there are references to persons described variously as 754
witches, sorcerers, magicians, medicine-men, and possessors of the evil eye,[2] and [114]
their activities and methods are described, but there are few references to the way in which they were treated. The sanction applied to witchcraft is normally counter magic consciously applied by the victim.

Hofmayr speaks of 'the *jal yat*, the evil-doer, his aim in life is to do harm, both to 683
life and to property, either by natural means or others,' and adds that 'the *jal yat* 754
works in the dark, but if he is caught, he will be severely punished. Often he is handed over to the people who kill him.' Hofmayr also speaks of the 'poison mixer' (again *jal yat*) who 'is hardly ever discovered. If he is caught, the people will lynch him on the spot and his relations will have to leave the district.'[3] Another passage mentions that the compensation for killing a person possessing the evil eye is only
four head of cattle instead of ten. These references, supported by what the Shilluk [171]
have told me, suggest an attitude similar to that found among the Nuer and Dinka.

It might be expected that, if there were any greater development of concepts of 627
public law, and if the *reth* performed formal judicial and executive functions, acts of 671
this sort would be subject not to merely private retaliation with the consent of the 643
community, but rather to repressive sanctions applied by the *reth* or his representatives. In fact there is no evidence of this. It may be noted in this connexion that there
are instances recorded during the last thirty years of attempts to introduce alien 797
cults which would clearly be subversive of the ritual status of the *reth* and, through 687
him, of the religious foundations of Shilluk society. For this reason Shilluk who have 628
openly practised the Dinka cult of Deng have been severely repressed.[4] There is good reason to believe that such activities would have been punished by death in the past and they are, by their very nature, public delicts amounting to acts of treason.

CONCLUSIONS

Much of the evidence so far quoted is unreliable, mainly because the authors have 114
recorded impressions rather than facts. My own conversations with the Shilluk on 121
the subject have been limited and perfunctory, and for this reason cannot provide

---

[1] For example, the Nuer *rodh* or Ghoul - see Howell and Lewis, 'Nuer Ghouls—a form of Witchcraft', *S.N.R.* xxviii, 1947.

[2] *ajwago*, magician, *jal yat*, sorcerer, *yeb*, possessor of the evil eye. There are many references to the activities of such persons in Hofmayr, *Die Schilluk*. See also Oyler, D. S., 'The Evil Medicine Man', *S.N.R.*, 1920.

[3] Hofmayr, op. cit.

[4] See Willis, C. A., 'The Cult of Deng', *S.N.R.*, vol. xi, p. 195.

114 a basis for definite conclusions. It is, however, probably safe to say that among the
121 Shilluk homicide is a private delict requiring the restoration of equilibrium by the
671 payment of compensation in cattle. The main object of such payments is to marry
a wife into the kinship group of the deceased—rather than individually to the name
682 of the deceased—and thus ensure its continuity and increase, which have been interrupted
by the removal of one of its members. Retaliatory sanctions are also operative,
[672] in that the duty to take vengeance on the person of the killer or one of his kinsmen
is recognized.[1] In principle, there are here no profound differences between the
[171] Shilluk and their Nuer and Dinka neighbours. The rate of compensation is governed
by the relationship between the parties and thus the offence is subject to social range.
Patricide and fratricide, regarded as the gravest possible offences against the integrity
of the kinship group, are subject only to supernatural sanctions. These apply within
the local lineage in lessening degree according to the relationship between the persons
concerned, and the ritual expiation is known in Shilluk as '*cuila ji kipo remo*'.

628 We cannot, however, entirely ignore the strong tradition which prevails among the
Shilluk and the views of early writers, that the *reth*, as ultimate authority, had the
● 643 recognized power to intervene, to enforce such payments and, moreover, to exact
692 additional payments in person and kind amounting to fines which he seized for himself.
If we are to believe these traditions, we must conclude that public action against
114 warring factions, whose continued enmity was disturbing the peace of Shilluk society
as a whole, was sometimes undertaken. This does not, in my opinion, alter the argument
that individual acts of homicide were treated as private delicts involving
primarily the restoration of equilibrium between the units of society concerned.
If, however, the portions alleged to have been taken regularly by the Shilluk *reth*
[671] are regarded as 'fines' paid to the head of the State (though in my opinion this is
a wrong interpretation), then homicide among the Shilluk appears to be in a transitional
stage between a private and a public delict, and was so even prior to the
introduction of penal sactions by the present Government.

---

[672] [1] Pumphrey observes: 'It is interesting that where a compensatory payment for killing is due (in contrast to compensation for lesser wrongs) the net is cast wider and not only the lineage, but even members of other lineages of the same clan are expected to contribute.' Op. cit., p. 23.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

113 Banholzer, P. 'Im Lande der Schilluk', *Anthropos*, 1911.
— and Giffen, J. K. *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, 1905.
Beltrame, G. *Il fiume Bianco e I Dinka*, Verona, 1881.
Cann, Capt. G. P. 'A Day in the Life of an idle Shilluk', *Sudan Notes*, xii, 1929.
Crazzolara, Rev. Fr. J. P. 'Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Religion und Zauberei bei den Schilluk', *Anthropos*, 1932.
D. I. 'Conspiracy against the Mek of the Shilluks in 1917', *Sudan Notes*, v, 1922.
Evans-Pritchard, E. E. *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan*, Frazer Lecture. Cambridge, 1948.
Griffith, Nora. 'The Title of the Reth', *Sudan Notes*, xix, 1936.
Hofmayr, P. W. 'Zur Geschichte und sozialen und politischen Gliederung des Stammes der Schillukneger', *Anthropos*, 1910.
—— 'Religion der Schilluk', ibid., 1911.
—— *Die Schilluk. Geschichte, Religion und Leben eines Niloten-Stammes*, Mödling b. Wien, 1925.

> "Shillooks were pagans. They were soon afterwards converted Mohamedism for the sake of trading with Cairo and took the name of Funge, which they interpret sometimes lords or conquerors, and at other times free citizens". 3) 174 [797]

In another statement Bruce hits upon an important aspect of the inner organization of the state: 643

> "It is one of the singularities which obtains among this brutish people, that the king ascends his throne under the admission that he may be lawfully put to death by his own subjects or slaves upon a council being held by the great officers, if they decree that it is not for the advantage of the State that he be suffered to reign any longer. There is one officer of his own family who alone can be the instrument of shedding his sovereign and kinsman's blood. This officer is called Sid el Coom, master of the king's household or servants, but has no vote in deposing him; nor is any guilt imputed to him however many of his sovereigns he thus murdered. Achmet Sid el Coom, the present regicide, and resident in Ismain's palace .... seemed, by a strange accident, to be one of the gentlest spirits of any .... at Sennar. His place of birth was a village of Fazuglo, and it appeared to me that he was still a pagan". 4) [644]

That was the first time the world ever heard of the name Shilluk, and thus was the beginning of the problem, which is now more than one and a half centuries old. Many authors have supported this opinion of the Shilluk origin of the Fung kingdom, and many as well objected, producing speculations and theories. Others changed their opinions on second thoughts, and until now new handling of the subject and the introduction of new ideas concerning this tangible problem are still forthcoming; but we can summarise these controversies into three major lines: 114 174

1) The Shilluk origin of the Fung. 5)

2) The Arab origin of the Fung - or generally the Eastern origin. 6)

3) The Western origin of the Fung, i.e. Darfur or other western Islamic empires of the vast Sudan. 7)

What concerns us in this paper is the first item; that is, broadly speaking, the relations between the Fungs and the Shilluk, while the origin of the Fung themselves is more or less a historical subject. 121

---

3) Seligman, p. 424. (As there is in Vienna but a French translation of Bruce, I prefered to quote him, whenever it was possible, in English from any other book).

4) Seligman, p. 423.

5) Bruce, Arkell, Westermann, (and Crawford to a certain extent).

6) The Fung Chronicles, Awad, Bouseily, and Jackson are for the Arab origin, Chataway and Mulder are for an eastern origin, i.e. the Fung were sent by Abyssinia to restore order after the fall of Christian Soba.

7) Tremaux, and later on Arkell.

To sum up what has been said above we may say that about the second half of the 16th century, a relatively fair complexioned wave of people settled in the present Shillukland, and united the aboriginals under the leadership of Nyikang into the framework of a nation. 174

The Shilluk traditions, as my informants told me, reveal that the ruling class brought with it the system of kingship. Nyikang had taught the people the exact procedure of electing the new kings; a procedure which is followed to the word until our day. If this is true, we can presume that Nyikang, when he taught the Shilluk this unwritten law, was quoting as much as possible the succession law of his own homeland. Some of the important procedures, or let us say a rite performed to know if the deity gives his consent to the new king-elect, is performed under the waters of the Nile. Quite readily this rite would be understood if we remember the Shilluk tradition which says that the original home of Nyikang was situated on the banks of a NAM DOUN , which means a great river or a lake. [173]

Hofmayr tell us that Tugo, the Shilluk king number 10, who reigned between 1690 and 1710, was the first king to introduce new coronation ceremonies. He says: "Tugo führte neue Krönungszeremonien ein, an welchen die Shilluk noch heute streng festhalten". 15) If this is true, and if we reject the story told to me by my informants, and presuming that Nyikang's own family were a stock of nomads, we can say that the present Shilluk kingship was a cultural element among the aboriginal inhabitants of the area, which may have been dormant during the first rule of kings who were still clinging strongly to their own traditions, and most naturally looking down upon the aboriginal practices and cults. A hundred years later, the glorious past of the ruling cast may have dimmed, and mixture and degradation of some of the ruling family members may have ultimately brought about new "shillukicised" generations, thus bringing the old customs into practice. This is a mere conjecture that needs more study to prove or refute it, and this is not the right place to discuss it.

The famous divine kingship among the Shilluk is still in practice. The notion of the kings being the incarnations of the first king, i.e. Nyikang, is still working, and the coronation ceremony of King Kur, in 1951, 17) is an undisputed proof of the existance of such a notion. When such an idea is so strongly adhered to unto now -no matter if they are Moslem or Christian Shilluk convertees- it follows quite logically that the other component of the divine kingship must be functioning, or at least be still vivid in men's mind, and will be readily executed if there were free chances. 18) The other component is naturally 643

---

15) Hofmayr, p. 77
16) Westerman, p. 163, translates a story about the objection of Nyikang to human sacrifices practiced by some mysterious people of the river, whom he captured and incorporated in his domains. [114]
17) Howell, pp. 189-203. This article contains a good picture of Shilluk kings installation ceremonies. [648]
18) The government does not allow it any more.

643 the ceremonial killing of the kings. Some authors have discarded this practice 19), and alluded some killing of kings to family quarrels and competition over the throne. It is true that some brothers killed each other, but this is still one of the attributes of divine kingship.

According to the information I gathered in Malakal, King Dak, who died in 1951 at the Malakal hospital, was well guarded by the police during his treatment in the hospital, and [648] no Shilluk was allowed to visit him lest he may be killed in the same traditional way as his ancestors. 20) My informants were sorry for the natural death of Dak, but they seemed to have accepted it as they were helpless against the troops of the central government. Just how far the Shilluk nation as a whole accepted it, I could not tell.

631 The political administration of the Shilluk country and its components may be summarized as follows: 21)

a) **The Hamlet:**

This is the smallest political unit with a chief at its head. The hamlet is formed by a lineage group of homesteads.

b) **The Settlement:**

This is a group of hamlets, i.e. a group of lineages gathered into a large area. At the head is a chief, called the Jago.

c) **The District:**

The Shilluk country is divided into eleven districts; each district is a combination of many settlements. These districts, though said to be organized by Nyikang, are not a permanent political factor. Its importance may have been felt in exceptional periods such as warfare, or to meet a common danger. The [648] Egyptian government, and after it the Anglo-Egyptian government, used such divisions as administrative units. The important districts from the Shilluk point of view were Muomo and Tung, that is, the northern and southern marches of the land.

d) **The Province:**

There are two provinces in the Shillukland. These are important political divisions, and their importance has been shown clearly above. The chief of Debalo Kwom, and the chief of Golbany are the two chiefs of the southern and the northern provinces.

---

19) "Evans-Pritchard considers that the ceremonial putting to death of kings (among the Shilluk) is probably a fiction ..." Butt, p. 54.

20) See also Howell, (S) p. 157.

21) Butt, pp. 46-48.

643 776 of his followers. The Shilluk do not say that Nyikang died or passed away, but say -as my informants told me- he was angry with his people, and, in a strony night, was gone. This assumption is necessary for the conception of Shilluk kingship. The idea may be summarised thus:

1. Every king who rules the Shilluk is an incarnation of Nyikang,
2. as the soul of Nyikang is thus incarnated in the body of the king, it would suffer every kind of weakness the body suffers;
3. as this would mean the loss of the protective and guiding spirit of the whole nation, it was necessary that the kings should not be left to die of old age;
4. and thus came what we term the ritual killing of the king.

171 Among the Fung, we have no such idea about kings, and the post of kingship itself. This is due to the fact that the Fung were Moslems, and as it is implied in Islam, there is only One God, and there is no possibility of incarnation, or such would be a return to paganistic practices. No one who wrote about the Fung kings ever hinted at the existance of such an idea. Thus, one of the conditions of divine kingship, indeed the core of this kind of kingship, is lacking among the Fung.

b) The Mode of Accession to the Throne:

643 It is easy to understand the Shilluk notion of incarnation from the way they apply it. The important feature which dominates the installation ceremonies of Shilluk kings is the seating of the king-elect on a special stool brought for the occasion from the Shrine of Nyikang at Akurwa. At first, the wooden effigy of Nyikang is placed on the stool by a priest, symbolizing that Nyikang himself is sitting on the stool; then the effigy is removed and the king is seated. In this was, the [775] soul of Nyikang takes possession of the body of the new king. And after this ceremony, the king is considered a king.

Another important rite in a king's istallation is that a king must pass a month in complete seclusion before going to Fashoda for the seating ceremony, and another ten days in a special place called Aturwic in Fashoda after the seating ceremony. In this time, the king is considered to be in a solemn mood of contemplation, and in communication with his great grandfather, Nyikang, and other ancestors. During this time of seclusion, the king is provided with a girl, who is given to him by a special clan. It was the custom that the king would marry this girl afterwards, but now it is according to his wish. Human sacrifices at the installation seremony are said to be given up now, but they were practiced in the past. 56)

---

56) In former times, it was usual that the king would pass over a bounded old man as he marches towards Fashoda, and the multitude of the Shilluk followers of the king would also tread on this man, and naturally he dies. Now a sheep and bull are used instead of the man. See Seligmann, p. 94, and Howell, p. 196.

I have proposed Jebel Ahmed Agha as a site of the Fung garrison, because it is well protected by the mountain, and its elder name was mentioned by Werne as Defafonj in 1840, by Petherick in 1862 as Jebel Tefan, by the Omda (mayor) of Abu Geili, as Jebel Tiafan, and by Nalder as Jebels Teifa and Fam. 56) Of interest to us is that Defafonj means in Arabic The Bank of the Fung. It could imply the borders of the Fung. 174

The other choice, the present Malakal area as a site for a Fung garrison, is supported by the Shilluk tradition. Here, we come to solid proof that the Fung and the Shilluk did contact each other. At the very beginning of the Shilluk history as told by their tradition, Nyikang, while consolidating his power in the Shillukland by subduing the various segments of the original inhabitants, met with a force called Cai or Ja puny 57), which are both identical with the people of Sennar, or the Fung. The Shilluk tradition tells of a battle at Wau -a locality a little north of Malakal- between the Fung and the Shilluk under Nyikang's leadership. Though the Shilluk were not victorious in this battle, the Fung seem to have retired to the north, perhaps to Jebel Ahmed Agha. 173 174

This was the first Shilluk-Fung encounter; a hostile relationship!! Afterwards, we hear of more relations, of wars and slave hunting, and even of a kind of alliance in warfare. The end result of such changing relationships was the existence of many Shilluk slaves and warriors among the inhabitants of the Sennar area, in addition to other slaves from the Nuba Mountains, and other parts of the Negroid and Negro Sudan. 174

Thus, we may see that the Fung were expanding to the south always, and if they expanded in the Dar Fung area -which is a mountainous area- it would be easier for them to extend their rule up the White Nile basin, which afforded no such geographical hindrances, and simultaneously afforded a bigger and wider influx of resources such as slaves, ivory, and other articles of trade, which were not only consumed in Sennar, but found other markets in Western Asia and Europe through Cairo. But as the upper White Nile basin is more or less an area infested with swamps and other ecological conditions alien to the Arabs and to the Fung settlers, there were no well defined borders. It was merely a highway, and in a political sense a no-man's land.

3) The Cultural Aspects of Kingship

a) The meaning of kingship:

Among the Shilluk, all writers agree that the notion of kingship is an undivided part of the Shilluk religion. Nyikang, though a national hero and possibly a real historical personality, is considered by the Shilluk to be still living to protect the land 643 776

---

56) Arkell, (A), p. 216.

57) Lienhardt, p. 144, see footnote No 1.

171

Of the Fung, we have no record about the way their kings were crowned in Sennar. But ceremonies of installing the chief of Jebel Gule were recorded recently, and it is alleged that it is an imitation of what was once the case in Sennar. 59) No human sacrifices were recorded, but the seating of the chief on a stool, and his seclusion in a special hut with a girl for forty days after the seating are recorded, but he is allowed to meet friends after sunset every day. The stool in this recorded ceremony was brought from Jebel Keili, another principality of the Fung kingdom, because the stool of Gule was destroyed during the Mahdiya regime. The stool is guarded by "Nas el 'ada, whom one might apparently describe as the hereditary guardian of the mysteries". 60)

If we accept the alleged similarities between what was the case in Sennar and the ceremony at Gule, it would be interesting to point out that there is no effigy, nor any special symbol seated before the new chief sits on the stool. The lack of such a rite undoubtedly indicates the failure of such comparison between the Shilluk and the Fung. The sitting on the stool would then mean the lawful inheritance of power in the country, just as it is and was practiced among civilized nations. What is really underlying the sitting on a throne, we cannot at the moment venture to say.

e) The Mode of Death of Kings:

643

We have stated above that the ceremonial killing of a king would still be in practice, if the Shilluk were given free choice. Shilluk kings were either strangled, clubbed to death, or walled up in a hut until they died.

171

Among the Fung, we have no information about king killing, except the inference Bruce gave about a special post in Sennar for a royal executioner. It may have been the case that brothers fought for power in Sennar, but this was a wide phenomenon all over the world. It can be a ceremonial killing, if the whole kingship institution was based upon the idea of incarnating the guiding spirit of the nation in the person of the king. But since this conception was missing in Sennar, so another point of comparison widens the gap between the Fung and the Shilluk.

---

59) Chataway challenges the validity of comparing the traditions of Jebel Gule with what was the case in Sennar. He says "Gule ... is mentioned several times by Arkell. While information regarding Fung history and customs may be obtained at Gule, it is essential to recognise that it is a tainted and unreliable source, a point which other observers have failed to recognise". Charaway, p. 114.

60) Arkell, (A), p. 232.

In fact, the tradition of the Shilluk tells us of hostile 174 relations between them and the Fung, and their first encounter, as was stated above, was on a battlefield. It is quite logical that, as the Fung extended their domains across the White Nile to the Nuba mountains and the Kordofan, the Shilluk were also -for a time- incorporated in the Fung domains. 72) We must not exempt the Shilluk from sharing the same fate with other Negro and Negroid neighbouring tribes. Many of the members of these tribes were transplanted to the Sennar area, forming the bulk of the Fung armies. It is recorded that these people gave their old village names to the new villages where they were living in service of the Fung Empire. Shilluk were among the Sennar armies, and Bruce rightly said that Shilluks are the troops of the king. And owing to the extreme aloofness and haughtiness of a Shilluk, it is not possible to explain the existence of Shilluk in the Fung army, or the transplantation of these Shilluk outside their country as an act of free will on the part of the Shilluk, or as free lancers serving the military ambitions of their deadly foe. The Shilluk must have been compelled to such acts under coercive conditions. We must always bear in mind that the Shilluk were facing a better organized enemy, with cavalry, which was totally unknown warfare equipment to the Shilluk. [725] The Shilluk may have been excellent in using their tactics of surprise attacks, and on relatively isolated groups, but should this tactic succeed against organized armies with cavalry?

Recorded in the Shilluk songs are many pieces describing [648 533] the frequent Arab slave raids, the havoc they played with the Shilluk, and prayers to the Shilluk former kings and ancestors to help them against the marauders. How could it be possible then to understand the situation arising from the assumption of a Shilluk origin of the Fung, or the statement of Arkell telling us that the governor of El-Ais was ruling the Shilluk relatives on the White Nile? How could it be possible that the Fung would forget their origin and loot their relatives, subduing them to slaves or mercenaries? And if the Fung did not themselves raid the Shilluk on account of alleged blood-relationship, why did they not afford them protection against Arab raids if we know that the Arab raiders are included in the Fung domain?

The other aspect upon which Arkell leaned was the killing 643 of kings in Sennar, and the resemblance of this habit with that 174 which prevails among the Shilluk. But we have invalidated this statement upon qualitative grounds. [114]

If kings of Sennar were killed lawfully by a royal executioner, which in itself is not a fact agreed upon, they were [171] killed on a totally different basis from that which was practiced among the Shilluk. Furthermore, we know that Shilluk kings were either suffocated, or clubbed to death, but with the Fung, a king

---

72) Arkell, (B), p. 17. He states that "The Fung Kingdom at its prime included most of the present Sudan, from Hannek in the north to Beni Shangul and the Shilluk country in the south ..."

174 was killed by cutting off his head with a SWORD, any other weapon
being a violation of custom. Tremaux writes that "... une épée,
643 seul instrument légal en pareil cas (tue un roi)". 73) This is
another qualitative difference between the Shilluk and the Fung,
[411] because we know that the Shilluk never use or used swords as weapons.

Now the information Bruce was furnished with came mostly
from Ashmet Sid el Qom, the alledged regicide of Sennar. This man
114 is from Fazugli, and as we always have to be cautious with Bruce's
statements, we do not know exactly whether Ashmet Sid el Qom spoke
643 about the custom of king killing as it was in the past in his
country of birth. Professor Awad and Mr. Chataway are also of this
opinion. What supports such an idea is what Frazer says about the
ceremonial killing of the Fazugli kings. Frazer writes: "In some
tribes of Fazoql the king had to administer justice daily under
a certain tree. If because of sickness or any other cause he was
unable to discharge this duty for three whole days, he was hanged
on the tree in a noose, which contained two razors so arranged
that when the noose was drawn tight by the weight of the king's
body, they cut his throat". 74) Seligman also quotes three instances
from Frazer about the killing of the king at Fazugli. 75)

King killing is a widely spread custom in Africa, and to
171 try to cope with it is outside the scope of this paper. But in the
Nile Valley, we have instances of the existence of the custom in
643 Meroe, when king Ergamenes cut the throats of the priests instead
of letting them kill him. We also have a story collected by
Frobenius in Kordofan about the custom of king killing, and how
one king was able to avoid his fate; and henceforth, the custom
was abandoned. 76 This custom is in practice, or now in dormant
form, among the Shilluk, the Burun and many other tribes of Dar Fung.
It was alleged to be in existence among the Sennar kings, and was
also alledged to have been the custom of the Abdullab Arabs, who
were the viceroys of the Fung kings in the North. 77) If thus the
114 custom was widely spread in the Nile Valley, there is no point in
alleging that the custom in Sennar was brought by the Shilluk,
171 because it is now clear that the origin of such a custom is to be
174 sought after in the deep past of the cultures and civilisations
that were planted, or originated in the Nile Valley.
643

There is no doubt that the Dar Fung tribes, as well as
the Nuba of southern Kordofan, represent the older substratum of
174 the whole of the central and southern Sudan. This is judged by
their isolation, the poverty of their present lands -which are
merely rocky hills- the different languages and cultures etc.

---

73) Tremaux, p. 199
74) Frazer, p. 286
75) Seligman, p. 428
76) Frobenius, L., Chapter I.
77) H.A. MacMichael, in his "History of the Arabs in the Sudan", Cambridge 1922, quoted by Seligman, p. 426.

UPPER NILE PROVINCE.

THE SHILLUK PEACE CEREMONY.

628 This district had been disturbed by a feud for more than three years. The people of the district were tired of the continual guerilla warfare, and some of them were anxious to have the trouble finally settled, and to return to normal conditions. Each side was afraid to make the suggestion lest it appear to be weak.

628 634 643 [797] After an outbreak the mamur and the king or mek advised the chief men of the district to get together and make peace. The chief of the district came to the mission and asked to have their conference of the chief men here. Since the feud the chief of the district had been able to exercise his authority over one faction only. The Mainam, faction, which included Mainam, Fakoi and Fatwara recognized him, but the people of Failo refused to accept him as chief. However the old men of Failo answered his call, and after several conferences both sides agreed that they desired to end the feud. They decided to inform the government and the king of their decision, and that peace, would be established, when it suited the government to send a representative with the king.

The king came to the mission as being neutral ground where both sides could come. He had two days to work before the arrival of the inspector. He needed only a few hours. The old men of both factions presented themselves before him. He said "You are the chief men. How is the talk?" They replied that it was finished. Akol, the chief of the district, then said it was his desire to rule the district well, but that he needed the help of the king, and the government to unite it. The king then dismissed the old men, and told them the talk was finished. He warned them to bring their fighting men to have the final ceremony as soon as the Inspector arrived.

628 634 [648] The Senior Inspector of the province, Mr. Jackson, arrived in the night. Chief Akol, heard the boat pass his village, and he was so anxious for the peace, that he ran to the mission to make sure it was the province boat. When he had found it was the boat belonging to the Inspector he ran back to call his men. He told the people he was

having the feud brought to a close, and warned them, that they would 628
do well to support him. He also told them, that should any man 634
seek to renew the feud he would find great trouble. The quiet of the night was broken by the kudu horn calling the men to assemble.

In the morning Akol came to inform the king that the men had [643]
arrived. The fighting men stopped at a respectful distance. Akol called the Mainam faction to come near. He was told to call the rest of his country, and he said 'it is my country' and he then called the Failo men, and they came near. The king greeted them, and then Akol proceeded to give them some advice. He informed them that the king had given an ox to be used in the peace conference. He told them that in the future they were to refrain from murder, on the road, in the fields, or wherever they might meet their neighbours. He added, "The person who will commit a murder will ruin his own house. If you have a disagreement bring a case before the King or the government. If busybodies from outside bring reports against your neighbours, do not let it estrange you again."

The young men with their weapons then moved out into an open place where they could find plenty of room for the final ceremonies. The men of each faction were separate, and Mr. Jackson, and the king stood between them. A great crowd of spectators had gathered. Some of them were from other villages, and some were men who from some reason or other could not appear in the performance even though from the interested villages.

Akol threw some dust into the air near the animal. It signified [789]
that as chief of the district he held the land, and it was also to ensure that no accident would mar the ceremony.

A time of speech making followed. The visiting chieftains made 537
talks of exhortation in which they emphasized the sacredness of a 628
conference sealed with the blood of a victim. The king made a talk 643
in which he pointed out that in colour the animal to be killed had 776
bits of both red and black. The red was for the blood that would be
shed should some one break the covenant, and the black was for the [648]
evil of such a course. "We, the black people unite with the red (white) people of the government to reconcile you." He told them that Akol was to be chief, and that the other responsible men were to obey him. He informed the people that the animal was a cow of Nyikang, that it was a descendant of a cow owned by Nyikang and

537 that its ancestors had also been owned by Dok, son of Nyikang.
628 (That was added because the people of this district pay great honour
643 to Dok.) The king added most seriously. "The flesh of this animal
776 is as my flesh, and its blood is the same as my blood. Great disaster
will come on you if you break the covenant, for you will be cursed by
the blood."

537 The other chief men spoke. The Inspector inquired whether or
628 not they were ready to abide by the promises they were making, and
648 both sides declared they were.

628 Then the king called Akol saying "take the spear". The king
643 then took the spear to be used from the hand of his follower, who had
782 been carrying it. The spear was held up for the people to view, and
they were informed that the person, who dared to break the oath
would have the spear enter his body, even as the spear would later
enter the body of the sacrifice.

The next ceremony was to pull the tail of the animal. Akol
628 pulled for the Mainam faction, but one, who would have pulled for the
782 Failo faction was rejected as being too young. Then one of their
oldest men stepped out and pulled its tail. This act they looked
789 upon as an oath, that the men pulling the tail were to bear the blame
if the peace should be broken. Disaster would come both to the man
who pulled and his family, should his faction break the agreement.

Akol then rubbed the spear on the back of the animal, and then
called for some one to give it the first thrust. A number who were
called to do it refused because they were too young, and they feared
the responsibility, because in case the feud should be renewed the
man who shed the blood would be held guilty. Even then a chance
was given to the people to refuse. They said, If you do not want
peace, do not let the blood be spilled." A man was found to strike
787 the animal. He gave it a serious wound. The animal walked toward
Failo. The people declared that the animal was showing that Failo
was responsible for its death, that is Failo had been the original
transgressor in the trouble. One young man from the Mainam
faction said the decision was sure to be against Failo because the
animal had been brought from Malakal with some cattle which were
then in Failo, and the wounded animal was almost sure to turn back
toward them. Then men from both factions speared it, and the
animal fell.

After the animal fell the two factions moved closer together. The 628
animal was then cut open, and some of the contents of the stomach 782
was taken by the old men, and thrown on the young men. That was done to show their united condition. The thought was that the animal eats a bit here and there, but in the stomach it all becomes one mass. Even so the inviduals of the two factions were to become one. The two factions then united in singing the song of Dok.

To conclude the ceremony the men of the two factions started to 628
march, and as they marched the two factions mingled until the onlookers could not tell to which faction the people belonged. The old chief was so happy that he leaped about, and danced like a boy.

The Inspector then gave some tobacco to the chief men: After that [648]
the meat of the animal was divided, and part taken by each faction.

The meat was to be eaten in the villages, and the tobacco was to be smoked, and the people were to become one also through the eating, and smoking of the same thing. The formal ceremony was finished.

Before the people separated the king called a man, who had been 628
under arrest for several months because he had taken part in the 643
feud. The king said "When you see a man from the other village will you again curse him, and call to your friends to come on to slay him ? The man said he would not. The king said "we heard of this man and his big words, but when we took him he was very small.' He added that was often true of boastful men.

Both factions now profess to be glad that peace has been made, and declare that they intend to keep the peace.

Rev. D. S. OYLER.

565 or survive as a subject element in what was originally their own area.
614 Queen Abudok[17] is said to have prophesied that one day the *Kwar
621 Reth* would eat up the *Collo*. This process can certainly be seen
644 occurring in some localities. For example in the areas of Detwok and
[173] Atoadwoi the *Kwar Reth* are already probably more numerous than
the *Collo*. The process, however, is probably not conscious and there is no marked *esprit de corps* between different branches of the *Kwar Reth*. There are great areas which contain no *Kwar Reth* and others[18] where the *Kwar Reth*, though present, remain subject to the indigenous *Collo* lineage. Though there is everywhere local rivalry the grave view taken by Queen Abudok is probably unjustified.

556 The other reason for the inordinate growth of the *Kwar Reth*
565 is their great wealth. Until the Turkish Government began its not
614 very successful attempts at governing the Shilluk with the assistance
651 of their *Reths* the latter were extremely rich in cattle. They acquired
643 these largely in the following way. Whenever one settlement waged
unjustified war upon another or refused repeatedly to obey his order, the *Reth* would raise as a "royal levy"[19] the adjacent settlements, who would go and drive off the malefactors' cattle and burn their villages. The strength of the levy would vary with the readily calculable strength of the opposition but a good margin of safety would be allowed to ensure that the levy would win. It is said that such levies were in fact seldom resisted, the victims being glad to save their skins at the cost of most of their cattle. The participators in the levy got a percentage of the cattle taken but the majority went to the *Reth*.

THE ORORO.

565 *Ororo* is a term used to describe any lineage of the *Kwar Reth*
614 which has been degraded, by act of the *Reth*, to *Collo* rank. Such are
644 described by the Shilluk as being "*Kwar Reth* really, but like *Collo*."
558 Numerically they are inconsiderable, but their origin and status are of

---

[17] A *Nyireth* who ruled the Shilluk country from Dettim in about 1630.

[18] *e.g.*, Awarajuok.

[19] *Tich mi Reth*.

interest. They owe their origin, so it is said, to a battle fought at 565
Detang in the time of *Reth* Odak against the Anuak in which the 614
Shilluk were worsted. In view of this reverse it was decided at a 644
council of war that contrary to custom the *Reth's* sons should all join 558
in the fight on the following day. Accordingly all went across the river to fight except one called Duwadh, and all who went were killed. This left a great many grandsons of Odak who, since only the son of a *Reth* may be appointed, could never become *Reth*. Duwadh, the sole surviving *Nyireth*, in due course became *Reth* and forthwith degraded the lineages of all the slain *Nyireths* and made them "as *Collo*." In this way the *Kwar Reth* was restricted to the descendants of Duwadh. The descendants of the other sons of Odak were dubbed "*Ororo*," the meaning of which is "sons of a crowd of girls."

It is said that the *Reth* has always possessed and still possesses 614
the privilege of pruning the royal tree by this process of excising 643 ●
branches relatively distant from his own. Nevertheless it appears 644
not to have been used except by *Reth* Duwadh on this occasion.[20] 558
Reth Fadict tried to degrade the lineage of *Reth* Nyadwai (a prolific monarch whose descendants form an unwieldy branch of the family tree) but was unsuccessful. Had he succeeded they would also now be *Ororo*.

Apparently degradation of a lineage was effected in the following way. Its representatives were summoned and a sprig of thorn having been stuck into the ground the *Reth* speared a bull and pulled the thorn out. By this act the lineage ceased to be *Kwar Reth*. Hence comes the expression "they have no thorn"[21] which is often used to describe the *Ororo*.

The *Ororo* play the part of masters of ceremonies at the induction 565
into Fashoda of a newly appointed *Reth* and have held for at least seven 614
generations the important chiefship of Tonga. For the purposes of 644

---

[20] It seems possible that in truth the old *Reths* used this device frequently and that the present *Ororo* are not really all sons of Duwadh but are various lineages at one time or another so degraded. This is conjecture, but no member of the *Ororo* will ever say which is the particular son of Duwadh from whom he is descended. They pass over the subject evasively, and it is unusual for a Shilluk to be either reticent or vague about his ancestry. 124

[21] *bung kodh yi geu.*

565 the rules of exogamy the *Ororo* are considered as a *Collo* clan and can
614 intermarry with the *Kwar Reth* as well as with any *Collo* clan other
644 than their own. The *Reth* always has some *Ororo* women among
his wives and it is traditionally they who smother him when his powers
● [643] of procreation are failing.

THE COLLO.

565 The *Collo* comprise the aggregate of subject clans whose various origins are for the most part obscure. A few trace their descent from those who accompanied Nyikang from the neighbourhood of Wau.[22] Others, also few in number, purport to be descendant from Nyikang's collateral relatives.[23] Many claim a mythical origin. Others[24] are avowedly accretions, others[25] again being descendants of the prior inhabitants of the country.

BANG RETH.

565 It has already been described how the *Reths* used to keep order
644 in the tribe and how they enriched themselves in the process. With
this wealth of cattle they maintained what was an important part of
their pomp and executive, namely a large body of retainers knowns as
Bang Reth. These were recruited in various ways. Originally the
[727] main source was captive enemies. In later and more peaceful times
they were recruited by voluntary enlistment of those who found
[735] themselves in poor circumstances and unable to raise the necessary
cattle to marry. Such persons, from the moment they became *Bang*
[614] *Reth*, severed all connexion with their own clan and became the
Reth's men, pledged to assist him in various ways such as building,
tending animals and odd executive duties and receiving in return cattle
with which to marry. One method of recruiting *Bang Reth*, which is
[682] of great interest in that it shows that there was an idea of certain wrongs

---

22. *e.g.*, *Kwar* Abogo, *Kwar* Muol, *Kwar* Nyileng and *Kwar* Ojul.

23. *e.g.*, *Kwar* Jur, *Kwar* Othou and *Kwar* Okel.

24. *e.g.*, *Kwar* Jung (who were originally Dinka).

25. *e.g.*, *Kwar* Oman (of Ogod).

being crimes against the community, was that in cases of homicide the 565 644
murderer (or his brother if the murderer was uncaptured) was compelled [682]
to become a *Bang Reth*.

Relations between a *Reth* and his retainers were friendly, nor does [643
the treatment of those who were enslaved as a punishment appear to 567]
have differed from that of those voluntarily enlisted. The custom
was for the retainers of each *Reth* to make a village for themselves near
Fashoda. There they would live until the *Reth* died. The *Reth's* 565
body would then be taken to this village and sealed up in a house 644
where it would remain until entirely decomposed. Only then would 766
the bones be removed by his retainers and buried in his original village.
Some of the dead *Reth's* retainers would then move to the village [743]
where he was buried and their descendants would there remain with
the perpetual obligation of tending his shrine. Others would remain
at their village near Fashoda and would have no further obligations
to the memory of their dead patron except that they and their descendants
would for ever be known as "*Bang Reth Kwadhker*" or "*Bang
Reth Nyakwac*" or as the case might be.

The retainers of a particular *Reth*, having severed connexion with 565
their own clan, became a fictitious clan in themselves. As such they 644
cannot intermarry, though there may be no relationship of blood. Nor [614]
could a *Reth* marry a daughter or sister of one of his retainers. A
Reth would address the daughter of a retainer as *kwara* (my granddaughter) [608]
which well indicates the relationship subsisting between them.

Under the present regime, partly because the Government has [177
frowned upon the practice and partly because the *Reths* are now 643
deprived of their previous source of wealth, the *Reth* has none of 648]
these traditional retainers. To-day the *Bang Reth* comprise the
descendants of retainers of previous *Reths*. In some cases they have
removed themselves to a new locality but in any case they remain
for ever *Bang Reth* "A" or *Bang Reth* "B" (in accordance with the
name of the *Reth* their ancestors served) and never rejoin their original
clan.

When a *Nyireth* was planted out the *Reth* used to send to live
with him a few of his own retainers who became *Bang Nyireth* and

Thus of the present thirteen division chiefs only four hold traditional 177
offices the others being government appointees over units based 634
upon these rather vague confederacies. Though the four high chiefs
do still possess an enhanced prestige their position is approximating
rapidly to that of their less hallowed colleagues. This evolution to a [642]
more local form of government is a natural consequence of the inevitable
lessening of the old autocratic power of the Rethship.

The impermanence of these confederacies is shown by a comparison between their composition in the Mahdia and their composition to-day (shown in Appendix IV), as also by the recent removal of the settlements of Mal and Abiangyei from Atodwoi Division to that of Detwok.

THE RETHSHIP.

The power of the *Reths* before Turkish interference was undoubtedly 643
great. It was based partly on the semi-divinity with which tribal [556]
tradition clothes them and partly upon their great wealth in cattle and
slaves. Justice was probably rough and large scale fighting more [692]
prevalent than litigation, such law suits as there were being seen, as
previously mentioned, either by the settlement chief or by the *Reth*
at Fashoda[29].

As well as wielding temporal power the *Reth* has always been the 643
high priest of the tribal religion. Nyikang is mediator between God 793
(*Juok*) and man, and each *Reth* is held to be a reincarnation of Nyikang. [775]
As high priest he has various obligations such as providing cattle for
the sacred herds at Nyilual and Wau and providing a canoe for use
at the shrine of Nyibodho (one of the Shilluk holy places).

Since the entry of the present Government the *Reth* has lost the 177
means of acquiring wealth in cattle and is no longer allowed to have 643
retainers of the traditional sort. He receives a substantial salary 648
but this cannot purchase many cattle and his present comparative [556]
poverty has caused an inevitable decline in his temporal and spiritual
prestige. The Rethship is living on its not inexhaustible store of
divinity and the wonder is that the store has lasted so well.

---

[29] The *Reth* is said to have had the enviable privilege of killing a tiresome litigant with a club.

177 The *Reth* to-day is a convenient potentate the basis of whose power
643 becomes more and more of an anachronism. In addition to being
648 President of the "Central Shilluk Court," and as such hearing appeals
from the twelve Division Courts, he is the mouthpiece of the Government
in an ever increasing number of administrative functions and is invaluable
in making peace in blood feuds and in dealing with all serious breaches
of the peace. The tribe pays him elaborate outward respect, and
continues to feel a genuine reverence for his office.

THE DIVISION CHIEFS.

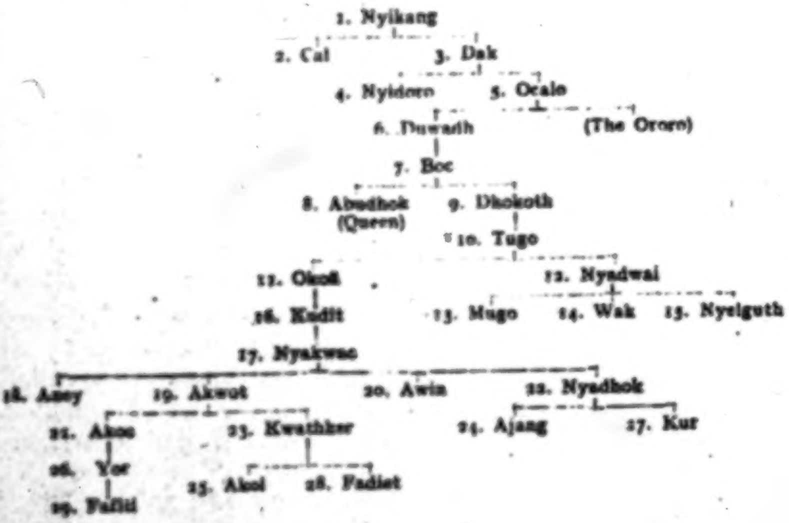
It has already been explained that nine of the thirteen division
177 chiefs are in a sense upstarts, being settlement chiefs exalted to an
634 eminence which tradition does not justify, but that they are becoming
progressively all to be regarded as having equal authority. They are
appointed by the *Reth*, usually on the nomination of a council of the
Settlement Chiefs concerned. The prospect of a monthly salary of
£E. 2 and the anxiety of each settlement to provide the Division Chief
makes the appointment a matter of considerable interest and rivalry.
[648] The Government's policy is generally to allow the chieftainship to
remain with the lineage of the previous holder unless he was dismissed
[613] for misconduct and it is wished to penalise him and his line, or unless
there are no suitable candidates from the holder's lineage, or unless
his lineage has become so weak as to render impotent any chief appointed
therefrom. On such occasions the chieftainship may change from
settlement to settlement, as occurred recently in Fashoda Division.
[613] There is an unfortunate feeling implanted in the Shilluk that so long as
[561] a senior member of the family is alive it is improper that a junior
member be appointed. A potentially able young chief will thus be
rejected on the grounds of the existence of a doddering uncle. Never-
[648] theless the Shilluk are basically aware of the desirability of a strong
chief and a veto by the Government, expressed beforehand, upon any
candidate who is too old will probably be excepted as a wise dispensation
from above, relieving them of the odium of passing over an elder
member of the family.

son. Alternatively, and probably more frequently, they are brought 848 up by the *gol* of their mother and regard their maternal uncle *in loco parentis*. In such case the child, whether male or female, is termed *okeijo* and belongs to the clan of its maternal uncle. Such a child [835] may have relations with the wife of his maternal uncle in the same way as a son may have relations with the wife of his father[29]. A girl [583] who is *okeijo* will be married from the hand of her maternal uncle who will receive the entire cattle price.

APPENDIX I.

TREE OF THE KWAR RETH.

(N.B.—This is Hofmayr's tree, adopted by Professor Seligman and here reproduced with spelling alterations only.) 173 643


1. Nyikang
2. Cal
3. Dak
4. Nyidoro
5. Ocalo
6. Duwadh
(The Ororo)
7. Boc
8. Abudhok (Queen)
9. Dhokoth
10. Tugo
11. Okon
12. Nyadwai
16. Kudit
13. Mugo
14. Wak
15. Nyeiguth
17. Nyakwac
18. Aney
19. Akwot
20. Awin
22. Nyadhok
21. Akoc
23. Kwathker
24. Ajang
27. Kur
26. Yor
25. Akol
28. Fadiet
29. Fafiti

---

[29] This fact well confirms the view that it is social expediency and no affair of blood which dictates the *dyalo* taboo.

APPENDIX II.

INSTALLATION OF A NEW RETH.

When a *Reth* [1] dies the Chiefs of Golbañ and Debalo consult as to who among the available *Nyireth* is to become *Reth*. This decided, the king elect is seized and taken to Fashoda where he stays quietly till the late *Reth's* mourning dance has been held. Then follows the installation ceremony. Details of this have been described by Munroe who witnessed it. The essential element is the ceremonial entry from Debalo to Fashoda. For this there are two rival "armies," *liñ Reth* and *liñ Nyikang*[2]. The latter army brings the images[3] of Dak and Nyikang in state from Akurwa to Fashoda and awaits the arrival of the *liñ Reth* at the north side of Khor Arepajur (which lies between Debalo and Fashoda). *Liñ Reth* then accompanies the new *Reth* from Debalo to the Khor, each man carrying a bit of dura stalk as a spear. *Liñ Nyikang*, of which the members carry thongs of twisted grass,[4] "capture" the *Reth* from his own army. Thereupon the *Reth* walks across the prostrate form of an elderly man (described as *odung*) who lies down in his path in the Khor bed. Thereafter the *Reth* is escorted to Fashoda by two "holy maidens" (*nyawola woa man kwer*) of which one is from the *Ororo* and the other from *Kwar Ohol*. These afterwards becoming his wives. The *Reth* then stabs a bull as *geidhi*[5] for the *odung*, who thereafter has traditionally the right to seize any of the *Reth's* cattle upon which he can immediately lay hands. The *Reth* is then taken to the four huts on the mound[6] at Fashoda. The image of Nyikang is placed upon the sacred stool (*kwom*). The *Reth* seizes the foot of the stool and the image of Nyikang is removed from it. The *Reth* then sits upon the stool and becomes thereby invested with his holy office. Three days seclusion on the mound follow, after which he is ceremonially washed in one of the four huts which is used exclusively for this purpose. Thereafter his installation is complete and he has become 643 clothed with the spirit of Nyikang which will remain with him until he dies.

---

[1] *Reths* are said in Shilluk not to die but to "pass" (*podh*).

[2] *Liñ Reth* is composed of warriors from *Gar* and *liñ Nyikang* from warriors of *Luak*.

[3] These are poles of bamboo crowned with ostrich feathers.

[4] *Ocallo*.

[5] *Geidhi* is the payment made by a person who has injured another as indication of his readiness to pay the customary compensation in due course.

[6] The mound is called *aturwic*.

Dak married his half-sister, Nyadwai. This precedent was followed 173 by all the old *Reths* who apparently always had one of their sisters among their wives. This sister was known as *okwalo* and used probably to be one of the holy maidens mentioned above. It is said that this practice has now ceased and that the *Reths* no longer take one of their sisters to wife. The last case which can be cited is that of *Reth* Nyakwac[7] who married his half-sister, Nyago. *Kwanyireth* Bol Acien of Lul (the present Chief of Fashoda Divison) is reputed to be descended from this union.

APPENDIX III.

TERMS OF RELATIONSHIP.

The Shilluk system for describing relationship and connexions by 601 marriage is classificatory. The terms used will be given under the following three heads:—

(1) Relationships with kinsmen.
(2) Other relationships.
(3) Connexions consequent upon the marriage tie.

(1) RELATIONSHIP WITH KINSMEN.

(N.B.—*In the terms given below that given first is the word without possessive suffix. That given second is the word with the addition of the first person singular possessive suffix. Thus "Wi Dang" means Dang's father, while "Nyimia" means "my sister."*)

(a) *Relations of the same generation:*

Uwi	*Uwia*	Every male kinsmen (theoretically however remote) if of the same generation, (*i.e.*, classificatory brother).
Nyiwi	*Nyiwia*	Same as *Uwi*, but femine, (*i.e.*, classificatory sister).
Umi	*Umia*	Uterine brother.
Nyimi	*Nyimia*	Uterine sister.

---

[7] This is kept highly secret.

195 beings have no motive power other than divine impulse. They are
565 moved always by God. Thus *yi kal Juok* (you have been brought
614 by God) takes the place of *yi bi* (you have come) which is a normal form
644 of greeting among friends.

When the conversation relates to or is being carried on with the
195 *Reth* himself, more complicated modifications are necessary. Objects
643 used by the *Reth* are called differently from their normal names.
There are many examples, most of which have been given by Professor Westermann. It is interesting that the names which objects assume owing to their association with the *Reth* are always names of similar but inferior objects. Thus his beer is called "water," his donkey is called his "dog," his spear is his "stick" and, strangest perhaps of all his head is his "pebble."

195 Elaborate circumlocution is necessary when enquiring about childbirth.
844 A married woman can hardly be asked if she has children or
how many had she got. Even a husband should not be asked outright
576 whether or not his wife had produced him children. The husband will be asked "has your wife found something small?" or "has your wife been helped by God?" It is also very bad manners to ask a woman what is the name of her husband.

835 These conventions might lead one to suppose that matters of sex
were regarded as delicate *per se*, but this is hardly the truth. Outside
wedlock there is no nicety. An unmarried girl will be asked with
[836] brutal frankness "*yi yaci men*" ("you were made pregnant by whom?") and here the word is the same as that used in talking of domestic animals. The inference is that delicacy is required not because the subject relates to sex but only if and when it touches upon the marriage tie.

576 No one can deny that the Shilluk are by our standards brutal.
682 Their code dictates that a man may be killed for a man, quite irrespective of the victim's guilt provided only he is from the clan of the killer of the man avenged.

577 Their moral code, though peculiar, is definite and strictly observed.
[837 The marriage tie is not sacrosanct, but rape, as also prostitution, is
548] almost unknown. Both are regarded with abhorrence.

the more distant settlements, owing to the length of the populated 361
area, is not very much shorter. Most parts of Shilluk country are 484
accessible to the inhabitants even when the water-courses and swamps [574]
are full, but travelling is not easy and social contact consequently
less frequent in the rainy season. The result of such periodic incon- 182
venience of communication and the length of inhabited country are 361
twofold. In the first place, in the past at anyrate, the immediate 484
power of the central authority the *Reth*, was slightly diminished and [643]
he was more dependent on the loyalty and competence of the settle-
ment chiefs. Second, difficulty of communication increases the isolation [614
of the settlement and intensifies the feeling of unity within it. Moreover, 621]
the clan, having no territorial basis, is put to a further disadvantage.
The settlement thus gains importance socially, economically and politi-
cally in the structure of the tribe.

The formation of the settlement is based on a particular association 621
of lineages and its structure can only be understood after a searching 613
examination of their position. The fission of clan segments, individual
enterprise and migration has been frequent for a very long period of
Shilluk history. In each settlement there are therefore both indigenous
elements and newcomers. Mr. Pumphrey has explained in outline 554
the position and significance of the *Dyil*.[1] They are fundamentally 613
associated with the land they occupy, and theoretically they enjoy great 621
prestige and authority. Among most primitive peoples the fixation
of sentiment on land is bound up with human interests and those who
are more closely bound to it acquire special functions and prerogatives
not accorded to newcomers. Besides their ritual association with the
land, the *Dyil* have obligations and observances of primary importance
in the social machinery of their settlement and they form the centre
round which internal political activities revolve. Subsequent accretions
known in Shilluk as *Wedh* normally hold a position of political subser-
vience to the *Dyil*. It must be emphasised here, that this implies no
social inferiority; it merely means that the *Dyil* are expected to take
the lead in matters of importance to all inhabitants of the settlement.
The *Jago* is usually the chosen representative of the *Dyil* lineage and
holds the *Lew Dwong* of office Mr. Pumphrey has pointed out that

[1] [Dyil are the descendants of the people who originally received grants of land from Nyikang. —Analyst]

[124] 613 recite it, but in any case it is given as an illustration of the process of
621 fission and the development of offshoots typical to any Shilluk clan
lineage and might well be done in figures only. *Debalo*, founded by
[173 *Pyem* who was reduced to the status of *Ororo* from the *Kwar Reth*,
565] was the first hamlet to be founded. *Pyem* had three grandsons, one
of whom, *Odheh*, migrated to a spot a few hundred yards away, in the
direction of *Tonga*, and there founded *Acop*. *Acop* is now the central
and most important hamlet in the settlement and is the home of *Jago*
Ameileh[3] who holds the *Lau Dwong* of the settlement and indeed the
whole of *Tonga*.

There is no apparent reason why *Debalo* should cease to be the
most important village, but the leadership of the *Kwar Nyimol* has
for some time been in that branch of the lineage who occupy *Acop*.
622 The *Lau Dwong* is not necessarily inherited by an eldest son, or by a
son resident in his father's hamlet. There are no rules of primogeniture
[428] and the choice was made with the approval of all members of the lineage.
[613 Even other lineages have some say in the matter and the appointment
643] must be confirmed by the *Reth*. Accession to the title of *Jago* is
thus controlled by the personality, prestige and competence of the
claimant. *Acop* has been the seat of the *Jago* at least for the last three
621 generations. *Debalo* and *Acop* are the parent hamlets of two separate
361 lines of segmentation. From *Debalo* sprang all the hamlets situated to
the east, while from *Acop*, which was itself founded from *Debalo*,
sprang the hamlets in *Yom* stretching towards *Tonga*. The process
[613] of fission which can be traced on the genealogical chart is substantiated
by many members of *Kwar Nyimol*.

The smaller hamlets which lie beyond the water-course behind *Dhoh Alal*, provide more recent examples of this breaking away of individuals and the foundation of new hamlets. They have not yet grown large enough to acquire a separate entity and they are still considered part of their parent hamlets. *Pa Gither* remains one homestead only, while its extension though more recent is larger. *Pa Gither* sprang from *Debalo*. In the case of *Pa Mayuh*, *Okwano* the son fo

---

[3] *Jago Ameileh is now dead.*

THE AGE-SET SYSTEM.

561 The age-grade[5] organization is a system of compulsory associations
based on classifications of age and sex. In structure it is usually tribal,
in outlook and political function essentially democratic. Among the
[621] Shilluk, however, age-sets are recruited within the local group or
settlement and have no connection beyond similarity of form and
function, with age-sets recruited in other settlements. As will be seen,
the role which the organization plays in tribal and settlement life is
very limited, and is confined to specific military purposes.

It has been stated by some authorities that the age-set system
is entirely lacking among the Shilluk or that it has broken down beyond
recognition[6] This would not be surprising, for the organisation of a
182 group into parallel associations based on age and sex, for political
561 purposes at any rate, is almost incompatible with an autocratic political
•643 system. It must be remembered that although the concept of monarchy
[171] among the Shilluk has not reached the same level as in the Lakustrine
Bantu kingdoms or certain other Bantu tribes, it is more developed
182 than among most kindred Nilotics. The age-set system necessarily cuts
561 across the bonds of consanguinity, and, without severe modifications of

614

---

[5] See distinction between "age-set" and "age-grade" as followed by Prof. Radcliffe-Brown and quoted by E. E. Evans-Pritchard in *The Nuer: Age-sets*—Sudan Notes and Records Vol. xix pp. 233-234. Doctor Evans-Pritchard also refers to "Age-set" system rather than "Age-grade" system and since this is a more accurate description his terminology is followed below.

[6] Hofmayer (Wilhelm Hofmayer "*Die Shilluk. Geschichte, Religion und Leben Ein Niloten-stammes.*" 1925) does not mention age-grades specifically, but with reference to initiation and warfare he mentions the existence of such an organization.

> "Every man is a soldier and literally always under arms. Every Shilluk who has ceremonially danced is a warrior as long as he is able to bear arms. They form groups. Every settlement is independent with its own *Bany* (principle singer and president). Different settlements combine and sally forth under the leadership of the eldest *Bany* against their powerful enemies. The *Bany* has only advisory powers and is chosen by the chiefs of the district. Unmarried youths form what corresponds to our permanent army, which is divided according to age and has many names."

social and political function, cannot exist in a society where authority 182
is held by virtue of blood. Further it is likely to raise ties and mutual 561
obligations which conflict with those patterns of behaviour which 614
unite the members of a clan. Usually, when the age-set system is
highly developed, the clan system is weakened. The reverse may also
be true, and since the kinship groups within the Shilluk settlement
retain their distinction, the age-set system is of no great significance.
This is particularly so with regard to political matters. The 622
Jágo[7] and the elders of the *Dyil* clan and a limited number of representatives 613
from the less powerful lineages hold political authority in the 643
settlement, and over them is the theoretical omnipotence of the *Reth*. 614

The group solidarity of the settlement springs from the power and 561
prerogative of the *Dyil* clan and from common interests and territorial 613
proximity. The compulsory association and stratification of all male 621
members of the settlement emphasises that feeling of solidarity, but 182
does not conflict with the political function of the *Dyil* clan, for its
purpose is limited to warfare. In inter-lineage disputes within the
boundaries of the settlement the organization does not function, but in [701]
warfare on a wider scale when the separate lineages must fight as one,
the young men and warriors are mobilized into age-sets.

Every male inhabitant of a settlement, on reaching the age of 561
puberty, is automatically grouped with his coaevals and together they
are recruited to the most recently formed age-set. Each age-set,
known in Shilluk as *Ric*, is made up of a series of sub-divisions which
are grouped together temporarily until a new reorganization is made.
There are two grades through which the members of an age-set will
pass before retiring from active military service. Recruitment is
compulsory and never individual.

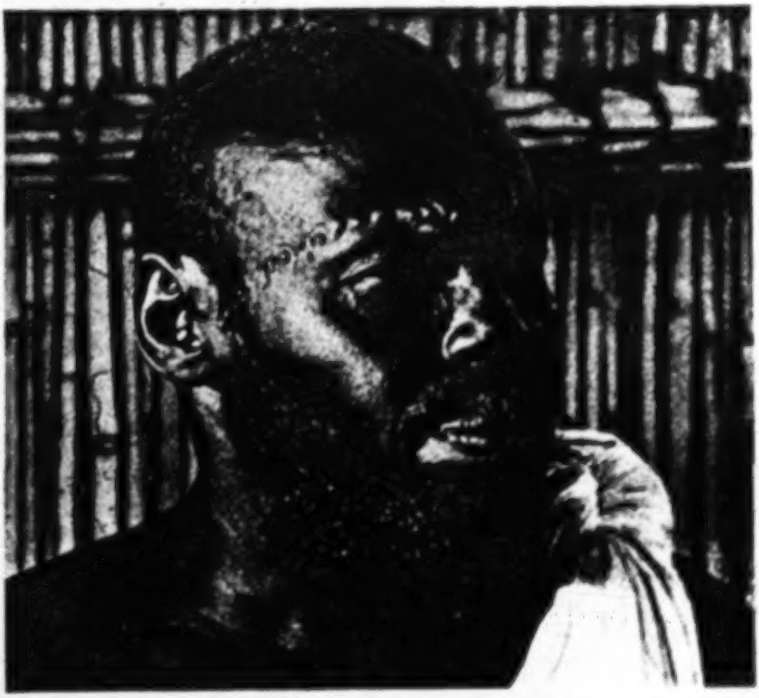
The general structure of the organization is best explained diagrammatically.

---

[7] Chief,

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

302
304
643



ANEI KUR, RETH OF THE SHILLUK.

[FACING p. 7]

105 similar to that of the Nuer and Dinka. They have, however, an established and theoretically omnipotent monarchy, of which there is no counterpart among their more democratic Nilotic neighbours, and which shows more definite and developed principles than those found in the institution of kings among the Anuak and chiefs among the Acholi. Whether this established and institutionalized monarchy is the result of diffusion from elsewhere or a natural and spontaneous development from the politico-religious functionaries who exist in embryo form among other Shilluk-speaking peoples is a controversial subject, which we do not propose to discuss here.[4]

SHILLUK RELIGION AND THE TRADITION OF NYIKANG.

The all-powerful being who exists in the minds of the Shilluk as
776 *a remote and amoral diety is called Juok. Juok is the Shilluk con*ception of God and is present to a greater or lesser degree in all things. Juok is the explanation of the unknown, the reassuring justification of all the supernatural phenomena, good or bad, of which life is made up. The principal medium through whom Juok is approached is Nyikang. The distinction between them is not clear. Nyikang is Juok, but Juok is not Nyikang, for Nyikang is also a mythological figure who takes his place as the hero-leader of Shilluk tradition. He is also the first *reth* of the Shilluk and the founder of the royal
643 house. Further the soul of Nyikang is reincarnate in every Shilluk
776 *reth*, and thus exists both in the past and the present. Nyikang is
[775] the *reth*, but the *reth* is not Nyikang. This paradox of the unity yet separation of the three is not easy to define. The Shilluk themselves would find it difficult to explain. Juok, Nyikang, and the *reth* represent the line through whom divinity runs, a conception which may be expressed as an analogy to the ancestor cult, only the cult is symbolic of the tribe as a whole rather than of the Kwareth alone or other individual kinship groups. The *reth* is clearly himself the medium through whom both Nyikang and, more vaguely, Juok are approached, and is the human intercessor of mankind with God. Voluntarily by

---

[4] See C. G. Seligman, *Egypt and Negro Africa*. George Routledge and Sons, Ltd. (1934). p. 60.

ritual acts, involuntarily by reason of his very existence, the *reth* 643
affects the fortunes and fertility of the tribe and controls the natural 776
phenomena which react upon crops and cattle. The *reth* is therefore the central figure of tribal religion as much as he is the actual symbol of political unity. He is responsible for their welfare and fortunes both spiritually as the present manifestation of Nyikang and temporally as the leading tribal authority. No Shilluk would seriously dispute the *reth's* divine attributes (unless a follower of some alien religion) though some might resist his more mundane powers.

The genealogy of the royal house of the Shilluk goes back for 173
fourteen generations, but Fafiti Yor, who ruled the Shilluk since 1917, 643
was the 29th *reth* because in many cases the succession has passed to brothers of the same generation or even back a generation to an uncle. This is clear from the genealogy recorded by Hoffmeyer and adopted by Seligman and Pumphrey. (*Vide* Appendix IV).

The main factors governing the succession of Shilluk *reths* are 643
these :

1. That only the son of a *reth* who has ruled the Shilluk is eligible. More distant relatives have no claim. The son of a *reth* is entitled *nyireth* in Shilluk.

2. That it is recognized that a *nyireth* may at any time attempt [669]
to usurp the throne after killing the *reth*.

3. For this reason the *reth's* sons or sons of previous *reths* are [644]
always potentially in opposition to the ruling *reth*, and they are not allowed within the confines of Fashoda at night. Theoretically at any rate, the *reth* must take every precaution to avoid this danger. For example it is never known in which of the many huts he sleeps at night ; he is said to move from one to another, and prowls round Fashoda at night if he suspects a marauder. The new *reth* Anei showed us some spears with a special black finish, which he had imported from Dinka country, and

643

which he said were for his personal use at night, since they would not glint and reveal his movements.

[644
591]

4. All sons of *reths* are brought up in a village away from Fashoda (either their mother's or that of some Shilluk chief who has agreed to adopt them), and there lead a somewhat secluded life.

The king or *reth* of the Shilluk is a classic example of Frazer's conception of a divine king. The argument resolves itself into the following essentials:-

1. The king has power over nature, which may be exerted voluntarily or involuntarily.
2. He is considered the dynamical centre of the universe.
3. Hence the well-being of the universe depends upon his actions and the course of his life; both must therefore be carefully regulated.

The fourth essential, which Frazer stresses later in the third edition of the *Golden Bough*, is that of 'king killing.' By this he means that the physical condition of the king reacts upon the fortunes of his people and must not be impaired. Therefore, if the king shows signs of senility or physical imperfection, he must be removed, and a successor substituted.[5] The only way to remove him is to kill him. Among the Shilluk there is abundant and current evidence of the first three essentials both in the regulations which control the *reth's* life and the rites and ceremonies performed at his installation. There is evidence also of 'king killing.' There are in fact two forms of 'king killing' among the Shilluk:-

(i) According to tradition the *reth* may be strangled or suffocated by his wives if he fails to satisfy them, or shows signs of illness or senility, which may effect the welfare of the tribe. This is supported by tradition only.

---

[5] See C. G. Seligman, *Egypt and Negro Africa*, p. 4.

(ii) The *reth* may, at any time, be killed by a rival claimant to the throne. This is clear from tradition and is supported by the current evidence of the extraordinary precautions taken to avert possible attack during his lifetime, especially during the installation, and from the more recent events of Shilluk history. 643

These two forms of 'king killing' are not quite the same thing. The first is motivated by a desire to avoid the national consequences of the *reth's* waning physical powers upon the people as a whole. The second is motivated by the desire of a rival claimant to seize the *reth*ship. There is, however, a connection between the two, since the rival—always the son of a *reth*—will have more chance of success if the *reth* is unpopular because of tribal disasters which are attributed to his physical deterioration.

In September 1943, *reth* Fafiti Yor of the Shilluk, who had held office for twenty six years, died. That same year Anei son of *reth* Kur was elected his successor, and was finally installed at the capital of Shilluk *reths*, Fashoda, in March 1944. The late Professor Seligman speaking on the subject of divine kingship[6] said, "If it be permissible to speculate on the deeper significance of the beliefs and ceremonies I have described, more weight should, I suspect, be given to the complicated installation ritual of the Divine King than has hitherto been the case. In the past there has been an over emphasis on his ceremonial death. It is for future research to unravel the many emotional trends woven into the installation and rejuvenation ceremonies. For it is in these especially that the emotional projection upon the Divine King of his people's deepest desires for life, fertility, and prosperity find their clearest expression."

Our purpose here has been to record as accurately as possible all the ceremonial, all the diverse ritual and the public events which took place to ensure that Fafiti was safely laid to rest and his soul conducted peacefully to a new status in the ancestral hierarchy of the royal house, and to establish his successor firmly upon the throne. 121 643

---

[6] *loc. cit.*, p. 61

123 Our task has not been easy. It was almost impossible—
particularly during the more public events which were attended by
643 thousands of Shilluk--to observe all the individual ritual acting which
occurred, often simultaneously. The scene was set from Kwomo to
Tonga—a distance of about 160 miles—and the whole tribe entered
into the spirit of the occasion. Moreover, it was not seemly to
interrogate the performers while the ceremonies were going on. Thus,
while in many cases we observed behaviour, ritual and emotional
124 attitudes displayed by individuals or crowds, we were not able to
643 interrupt to demand an explanation from the participants. Most
of the onlookers knew little more than we did, though the events had
to them an accepted meaning in the context of tradition stamped on
[88] their minds from birth, but only vaguely so, for Shilluk tradition
rests in the minds of the elders. In a series of ceremonies, which are
[614] carried out by many clans each with its peculiar duties to perform,
each man knows with any degree of accuracy only the part that he must
play. Subsequent interrogation was often sterile. Sometimes the
Shilluk do not know, sometimes tradition exists only as such and the
meaning is lost in antiquity. Interest after the event--at the time
roused to a high pitch of emotional excitement--soon dies down.
Answers were therefore often evasive, contradictory and even
misleading.

128 Subsequent events, prolonged leave in England, accumulated
643 administrative duties, etc., have made it difficult, if not impossible,
to pursue our investigations. The installation of Anei Kur is three
years past, and the results of our observations must be published now
at the risk of criticism. We have omitted in many cases to explain
fully the meaning of the varied forms of ritual, and failed to include
a full description of the origin and significance of the many sacred
and material objects used. At this stage of our investigations it
would be misleading to speculate too deeply into those things about
which our knowledge is far from complete.

643 It is not easy to draw conclusions, but certain facts are abundantly
clear :-

1. Since the well-being of the Shilluk tribe depends so necessarily on the very existence of the *reth* and every action he takes, the death of a *reth* and the installation of a successor must be most carefully regulated by ritual and religious observances. 643

2. The occasion demands strict observance of all the rites and ceremonies necessary to carry the tribe no less than their figure-head from one status to another A false step will cause disaster to the tribe

3. The period of the interregnum is one of intense danger for the Shilluk tribe Spiritually it is dangerous, because there is no human symbol of tribal cohesion. The *reth* is "out of status"; the whole tribe is in a like position The soul of Nyikang is without a home. The newly [775] appointed *reth* will later incarnate the spirit of Nyikang, but he does not yet possess fully the divine attributes which have the effect among his people of stabilizing his position To the Shilluk the political situation also is full of potential [669] danger because civil war may break out at any moment over the choice of a successor Even after the new *reth* has been appointed by the traditional college of chiefs, his life is endangered and every effort must be made to safeguard him

4. Therefore each stage in the burial and installation ceremonies successfully concluded is yet another crisis passed. [781] Emotional tension is manifest throughout—a rise and fall of political and religious feeling until the final climax is reached when the new *reth* is confirmed in his position by the homage of the temporal heads of the country Although the Sudan Government did not intervene either [648] in the choice of the new *reth* or in the form or timing of the events, the Shilluk knew well enough that no bloodshed would be tolerated. How much greater then must

643 this emotional tension and political excitement have been in the past.

781 5. Although many of the Shilluk treated the ceremonies lightheartedly and on occasions with much laughter, deep in their hearts was a profound respect for their own religious beliefs and a feeling of awe at the presence of Nyikang.

178 6. Despite the stormy path of recent Shilluk history in which *reths* were assassinated, hanged and exiled by an alien government, and despite the disintegrating influences of civilization, the continuity of tradition and the pious attempt to follow it was remarkable.[7]

182 643 648 7. The songs and ceremonies were characterized by a marked anti-Dervish attitude which dates back to the persecution of the Shilluk and their rulers by the followers of the Mahdi. The facts show that these attacks increased rather than weakened the unity of the tribe and indeed, strengthened the institution of the *reth* as the symbol of tribal cohesion in the face of opposition.

104 It is sometimes difficult to translate Shilluk terms accurately and concisely into English. Original Shilluk terminology is therefore used extensively in the text. The following Shilluk terms are consistently employed :—

Reth: The "king" of the Shilluk.

Nyireth: A son (or daughter) of a *reth*.

Kwa: Literally "descendants of", refers to a clan and precedes the name of the clan. Thus *Kwa Okelo* "the descendants of Okelo", *Kwa Reth* "the descendants of the *Reth*."

Nyikang and Dak: Tribal heroes of the Shilluk. The first king of the Shilluk and his son.

---

[7] Cf. P. Munro. "Installation of the Reth of the Chol." *S.N.R.* Vol. 1. pp. 145 ff. (and reproduced in full in C. G. Seligman. *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*. Appendix I.)

In Part III the effigies of these kings are referred to simply as Nyikang and Dak, for they are thus referred to by the Shilluk. 104

Mudir—the Turkish governor of a province, still used in Arabic for a provincial governor.

Khor—Arabic for watercourse; commonly used in the Sudan.

N.B. In the spelling of Shilluk words the sound Ch is represented by "c" in accordance with the agreement made at the Rejaf Language Conference. [194]

RECENT SHILLUK HISTORY.

(W.P.G.T.)

From the time when the Turkish Government first occupied Kodok, and called it Fashoda[8] in 1867, the history of the *rethship* has been disturbed; successions have either produced large factions and revolts among the Shilluk, or else successive governments have had to step in to avert major civil war within the tribe. 175 643

During the time of the Turkish regime, the Mahdia, and the early years of the present government, the position of the reigning *reth* was always insecure; he was at any time liable to be ambushed and killed by an ambitious *nyireth*, who fancied his chances of gaining the support of the tribe, and becoming *reth*, in accordance with Shilluk tradition; but he was also liable to be the victim of informations laid against him to the authorities, and to be deposed, or killed by government.

Reth Kwathker, who was reigning at the time of the Turkish occupation, was deposed by the *mudir* of Fashoda on a suspicion of disloyalty, (Note 2) and replaced by a nominee Ajang Nyidhok, who was never accepted by the southern Shilluk. This produced civil war between the north and the government on the one side and the south on the other. Kwathker was captured and died in chains in Fashoda gaol. Ajung Nyidhok, who had never been tribally installed, was soon deposed also on ground of disloyalty, and the *reth*ship was abolished by the *mudir*.

---

[8] Fashoda the capital of the *reth* is actually 12 miles upstream of Kodok.

The experiment of administering the Shilluk without a *reth* did not work, and the troubles of the government were if anything increased. After a massacre of government troops at Kaka in 1875, the experiment was given up, and Kweikwon, a son of *reth* Kwathker was appointed *reth*. Some five years later in 1881, Kweikwon went on an expedition with the *mudir* of Fashoda to attack the Mahdi at Jebel Gadir in the eastern Nuba Mountains. The force was annihilated, and Kweikwon and the *mudir* were both killed.

An interregnum then occurred, until Yor Akoc, having gone to El Obeid and received the blessing of the Mahdi, installed himself in Fashoda. Relations with the Mahdi, however, and his sucessor, the Khalifa Abdullahi, did not long remain cordial. The Shilluk people were expected to provide corn and slaves in abundance, and when *reth* Yor failed to do so willingly, the wrath of the Khalifa descended upon him. The Emir Zeki Tummal set up a fort near Kodok, and ravaged the Shilluk country from top to bottom, eventually capturing *reth* Yor near Tonga and beheading him in the Dervish camp.

Kur Nyidhok, a first cousin of Kwathker, threw in his lot with the Emir, and went to Omdurman to pay homage to the Khalifa, who confirmed him as *reth*, and called him Abd el Fadil. While Kur was away in Omdurman, Akol, a son of Kwathker, raised a faction, and after a struggle, was prevented by the northern Shilluk from installing himself in Fashoda. *Reth* Kur lasted till 1903, when he was deposed by the present government on the grounds that his rule was unjust and oppressive; he may have been a victim of slanderous reports sent in to Kodok by eligible *nyireth*.

He was replaced by Fadiet, a son of Kwathker, a government nominee.

Fadiet died in 1917, and once more the Shilluk were divided between Fafiti Yor and Coti the son of the Turkish puppet Ajang, with the south supporting the latter; the government, had to intervene and instal and protect Fafiti by force. 175 643

From this short account it can readily be seen that the customary procedure of the *reth's* election had not taken place undisturbed for nearly one hundred years and perhaps much longer.

The effect of this stormy history in 1943 made it very difficult for the elders to remember what the procedure was in all the details. There was a constant urge to get back to the old tradition, but often quite important items were omitted or forgotten, and had to be done at the last minute in a hurry. Not even Shilluk custom stands still; it varies with the capacities of people's memories and also it is affected by outside influences. It is not a hard and fast pattern into which everything must fit. The Shilluk would like it to be, but are not always equal to the task. Certain aspects of the traditional ceremonies cannot now take place; it is no longer practicable to keep up the traditions of Dak, the son of Nyikang and great Shilluk conqueror. For example in days gone by, two subsections of the Shilluk, Akwabai near Fashoda and Abuor near Kaka, used to raid north to get the various things required in the ceremonies for the installation of the *reth*. There is now a tendency to buy these things in Kosti market. 178 643

The events which we describe fall in to four main periods:— 643

1. The death and burial of *reth* Fafiti Yor and the funeral dances held for him.
2. The election of Anei Kur.
3. The formal installation of *reth* Anei in Fashoda.*
4. Subsequent events which have occurred after his installation, which were motivated by a desire to confirm the *reth*, and which throw light on the nature and function of the Shilluk monarchy.

---

* During the ceremonies of installation we were ably assisted by other observers, notably Mr. John Longe and the Rev. D. McClure.

PART I.—DEATH AND BURIAL OF RETH FAFITI YOR.

643 *Reth* Fafiti Yor had been unwell for a month or two befor September 1943, but custom did not permit him to acknowledge th fact, or tell people about it. The news of his illness became publi early in September. He was being attended by a Shilluk medica assistant, but it was evident that his illness was becoming more serious and was not as simple as had been hoped. In the middle of the mont the *reth* was visited by a British doctor, who diagnosed an interna obstruction, which might or might not be cancer. The *reth* did no wish to come to Malakal hospital, and the doctor saw no good reaso to persuade him. He decided that he should stay under observatio for a month. Some days later news began to come in that his condition was much worse; and in the afternoon of the 21st a messag arrived in Malakal that the *reth* was unlikely to last the night. I fact, by the time the message arrived the *reth* was dead.

[195] *Piny bugon*—"There is no land—the Shilluk country has cease to be."

766 The day after the *reth* died he was laid in state in the house i Fashoda where he had passed away. The body lay on a mattress o its right side shrouded in white cloth. Some eight or nine wome [237 were fanning the corpse with fans made from the wings of wild geese 293] The women were the daughters of the *reth* and the daughters of *ret* [644] Fadiet. None of the *reth's* wives were there. Two small gourds o water were placed by the knees of the body. The part of the hous in which the body lay was screened off by grass mats made by th *reth's* wives some three feet high, and above the mat was a curtain o white cloth, which was drawn aside for people as they paid their las respects. There were no signs of mourning or wailing in Fashoda

The next night the body of the *reth* was carried secretly to Golbainy five miles north of Fashoda, where it was at once buried in the *reth'* private village in the house of his senior wife. It is traditional for th *reth's* body to be sealed into a Shilluk house near Fashoda and no buried for a year after his death. *Reth* Fafiti on his deathbed expresse

a wish to be buried at once, as his father *reth* Yor had been buried at 766
once after being executed by the Dervishes.

The grave of a *reth*, and of all *kwareth*, is a shaft dug in the ground with a cavity cut in the bottom of one side to form a vault. After the body is placed in the vault, it is shut off with stakes and the shaft filled up with earth.

Some few days before he died the *reth* was baptised a Christian. [747]
It is possible that his conversion affected the cermonial connected
with his death; the absence of his many wives from the ceremonies, [177]
and his request to be buried at once and not in accordance with traditional custom suggest this.

The *reth* is looked upon by the Shilluk as responsible for their 643
prosperity, and his strength in their eyes causes the Shilluk, their crops and their herds, and the fish and hippopotamus in their river to increase. In times of famine or cattle plague, at once the Shilluk begin to feel
that the *reth* is losing his powers. For two years prior to 1943 the [731]
Shilluk crops had been very poor. In 1942-43 the crops were worse than ever, and wholesale deaths from famine were only averted by large scale grain imports by the government. After the previous famine, which lasted for three years ending in 1935, the *reth* had become seriously ill. This time he was an old man, and knowing his responsibilities to the Shilluk, and feeling his physical powers failing owing to his illness, he doubtless lost the will to live, and wanted to die. Whether he was ceremonially strangled, as is traditional for *reths* and all the *kwareth*, we do not know, and cannot find out. We incline to the view that, as his death became certain, and he and his family held no further hope of recovery, he was smothered. It would have been unseemly to have held a post-mortem, and other information is not available. It might be put in this way; it is possible that he was "assisted" to die.

After his initial election the new *reth* was soon busy thinking about 643
the wake for Fafiti Yor. Shilluk opinion seemed to think it would 766
not be held for a year after his death, and that the tribal installation

● 643 766 of the new *reth* would follow still later. It was thought that the time of the early maturing grain was the time to hold it. But the *reth* elect and responsible advisers seemed to think it should be got over quickly; maybe the general quickening tempo of life had something to do with it. It may, and we think this more likely, be due to a desire to get all the ceremonial over without undue delay. For the *reth* had been elected without a fight, and the Shilluk were so pleased that he had been chosen without violence, or the taint of being a government nominee, that they wanted the period of uncertainty cut down as far as possible.

The attendance at the funeral dance was said to be a reflexion on the prestige and the popularity of the late *reth*. This would be an interesting gauge, for the last time, of the esteem in which Fafiti had been held by his people to the end. His prestige had gone through 643 various vicissitudes. He had from the beginning suffered from being a government nominee, and the opposition of the southern Shilluk [648] to his appointment, muted by government action, prevented his obtaining a willing and personal ascendancy over them for many years. As soon as his authority was complete, there followed a period [649] of famine in the early 30's and the attempt by Nyawelo the son of *reth* Kur to assassinate him. This attempt would probably have been successful but for government intervention.

Again in 1936, Fafiti became ill, and the future for the Shilluk was once more clouded. He recovered however, and during his last years his influence throughout the Shilluk country was great, and he was held in high esteem by all his subjects.

Near the time of the funeral wake, the Shilluk chiefs and with their 766 men began to collect bulls for driving to Golbainy to be slaughtered for the dance. There was no compulsion on anyone to do this, but [626] public opinion required that those who could, should help according to their means. On the whole the pressure of public opinion was more insistent upon those who lived near than upon those who lived farther away.

182 766 dance at Pareth Fafiti lasted three days only, and no dance was held at Fashoda at all.

[614] 766 The duties of organizing the dance and of beating the drums fall to a clan called Kwanyikir, the majority of whom live in the vicinity of Kodok. They are responsible for discipline among the dancers, and in particular for keeping unauthorized persons out of the sacred spots. About two hundred and fifty bulls were slaughtered for the occasion, fifty of which were provided by the family of Fafiti and the rest by well-wishers, who included a number of Arab merchants. The distribution of meat was arranged by Kwanyireth Kir, chief of Fadiang, who is chief of all the *kwareth*. As he is senile, blind and deaf, he was assisted by Kwanyireth Bol, chief of Lul and government court chief of the Fashoda division for the portion of Gol Nyikang.

643 776 The new *reth* has no special functions to perform, and it was noticeable how careful he was to keep himself in the background. He never appeared in public while the dances were in progress, and though he attended on all three days he always went straight to his hut on arrival, and remained there during the day, and until he was ready to return
[644] to Fashoda. It was obvious that the proceedings concerned the late *reth* alone, and it was his son Byawelo Fafiti who acted as host.

631 766 We had hoped that the form in which the contingents of dancers came in would throw some light on the traditional grouping of Shilluk sections and former political organization. We had been told by the *reth* that all sections in the three divisions of Fashoda, Golbainy, and Detwok would be represented, and no one else. In fact a contingent also came from the Athodwoi division from north of Detwok. As far as could be seen the size of the contingents corresponded with the poll tax lists, and from those contingents who did come, very few warriors could have been missing. In the confusion of the dance it was not easy to see how the sections grouped themselves, but we got the impression that the Golbainy division split up into what, in government terminology are called "sections," but which tribally are more like the other divisions which participated. For example the sections

drums began to beat, and the dancers, after dancing round the drums, 766
moved off to salute the tomb of the late *reth*, singing the chant of
Nyikang. They then broke up into smaller parties, each led by one
or more of the important chiefs present, who brandished their swords
in the air in front of them. The sons of the late *reth* did not take
part in the dancing, but his wives and female relatives were much
in evidence, dancing in front of and around the tomb and round the
village, carrying the late *reth's* spears. Each party in turn visited
the five huts of the late *reth*, the ordinary dancers singing outside and
the chiefs dancing up to the entrances. During this ceremony and on [535]
subsequent days, old men and women would often execute *pas seuls*,
the women with swords or performing the symbol of mourning by
casting dust into the air. Some men imitated lions, and old people
danced round the byres where the cattle of the late *reth* had been
stabled.

After half an hour of dancing the drums stopped, and everyone
sat down, but they began again after a short interval and the crowds
took up the chant of *reth* Yor. The songs of the other *reths* were also [533]
sung, of Fafiti (two in number), of Yor, Kur Nyidhok and Kwathker,
and occasionally the chant of Nyikang. Shortly before sundown,
the drums were drawn and carried outside the village. The *reth*
left for Fashoda and the dancers dispersed to their homes.

THE PUBLIC DANCE

Early the next morning, crowds began to collect in the village, 766
and women, mostly *bangreth*, danced round the village singing and 535
moving up to the houses of the late *reth* each in turn. No drum was
beaten, the women advancing and retreating with a limping stride –
one long pace, one short, with the emphasis and weight on the
former. Individual women were also dancing around with sticks or
with the swords of their husbands.

The new *reth* arrived at 10.30 a.m. and went straight to his house 766
without appearing in public. Shortly after his arrival the warrior [643]

obvious variation on the second day, though different contingents 766
took part. On each day, at the close of the ceremonies the drummers [781]
whisked the drums from their holes and rushed them out of the village. This was a signal to the dancers to disperse, and they did so with great speed and with mock terror. The spirit of the late *reth* was said to return on the drums being drawn, and hands were clapped by the onlookers as before. On the last day, the holes in which the drums had been set up were immediately filled, and water poured over the spot, and a sheep was brought to the site. This sheep was not immed- [782
iately sacrificed, but was ceremonially purified and led off to be 783]
slaughtered elsewhere.

PART II—ELECTION OF THE RETH

(W.P.G.T.)

The *reth* of the Shilluk is elected from the body of surviving sons 643
of those previous *reths* who have been properly installed in Fashoda. Difficulties arose in recent elections owing to pretenders seeking the throne, who were the sons of men who, although they were proclaimed *reth* by the government or compassed Fashoda of their own accord, had never been installed by Nyikang.

In 1943 these "illegitimate" lines had died out, and all *nyireths* were genuinely eligible for the position of *reth*.

Apart from the law that all *reths* must be the sons of previous *reths*, there is no other rule governing the election. It is more or less understood now, though not in former times, that surviving lines of *nyireths* take it in turn to provide a *reth*, though we think agreement has to be obtained for this. The families of three *reths*, Fafiti, Fadiet and Kur contained among them some thirty or forty *nyireths* all technically eligible for election excluding infant children of Fafiti. In 1943, the two surviving sons of *reth* Yor were not considered owing to old age (one of them had left the Shilluk country some years pre-

643 viously, but was not known to have died). The sons of Fafiti were not serious competitors as it was generally agreed that it was not their turn; there was no doubt about that. The claim of the sons of Fadiet was not so easily settled. The head of the line was invited, with an elder from the same house, to an unofficial meeting, and he agreed to forego any claim for his line at the election, though the Shilluk say that he was given a more or less firm assurance that next time an election was to take place the house of Fadiet would provide the *reth*. Responsible Shilluk opinion accepted this, although we believe that unofficially certain elements among the southern Shilluk (Fadiet's country) would like to have seen a *reth* chosen from one of Fadiet's sons. Had one of them been chosen, we think it would generally have been held to be irregular. There remained the sons of *reth* Kur, who were considered to be more eligible than the others, as their father had been *reth* before Fafiti or Fadiet, and no *reth* had yet been chosen from his children.

177 It is often said that a *reth* nominates his successor. Fafiti, in his life time, agreed that that was the old practice before outside influences and governments started to interfere with the Shilluk, and this may well be so, or at least be the tradition, for Fafiti was a mine of Shilluk history. However in the last 100 years or so it has not been done, and Fafiti never intended to nominate his successor. It is clear, however, that a candidate nominated by a dying *reth* is still subject to confirmation or otherwise, by what we may call the "electoral college."

What Fafiti did do was to take under his wing Anei, one of the sons of Kur, and bring him up, as he himself had been brought up by *reth* Kur. Anei was known to be favoured by Fafiti, and he was even given outward signs of recognition by him, such as silver bracelets to designate him as a favourite. At Fafiti's death Anei was not nominated, but it was well known that in fact he was Fafiti's choice. Anei later told us that Fafiti used to say that if he were lucky he would be chosen *reth*. This designation by a popular *reth* would seem to be an important factor in the choice of the new *reth*.

The electoral college, in whom rests the responsibility for electing 643
a new *reth*, is a very conscious survival of the traditional structure of 666
the Shilluk tribe, and we believe it to be composed of those who are
the descendants of the men who were, at any rate traditionally, the [174]
lords-lieutenant of the various counties into which Nyikang divided
his kingdom, with the inclusion of three representatives from the large
royal clan.

Shilluk society is divided into *four* main classes, the Kwareth, 565
Colo, Ororo, and Bang Reth, two of whom the Kwareth and Colo 666
together represent by far the greater part of the tribe and together
provide the electoral college. The Ororo and Bang Reth have very
important ceremonial functions in the installing of the *reth*, but no say
in his election. As has been explained in the introduction the Kwareth [614
"class" are really an extended clan, they are the descendants of the 694]
royal house, and they all trace their ancestry back to a *nyireth* and
through him and his father directly back to Nyikang. The Colo are
the mass of the Shilluk people divided into many clans, who may
trace their origin to a *family* ancestor who "came with Nyikang"
to what is now Shilluk country, or claim to be pre-Shilluk inhabitants
of the country, or some of those non-Shilluk accretions, which Nyikang
collected to him as he pursued his conquests.

Nyikang settled the west bank of the White Nile, from "Tonga 173
to Mwomo," (the traditional boundary in the north is Moro some four 631
miles north of the river port at Kaka, and in the south at Falojo about
ten miles upstream of Tonga). As he went he parcelled out the country
among his followers, and made eleven of them chiefs[18] of the first
degree, answerable to him and looking to him for their appointment
and authority. When the organization became complete the lords
of the marches of Tonga and Mwomo became even more important
than the others by virtue of their duties in connexion with the defence
of the Shilluk boundaries and their distance from Fashoda. But
although these two were the most important on the executive side of

---

[18] They were all Colo. Kwareth, who are descended from sons of *reths*, did not, of course, exist in Nyikang's day, for he was the first *reth*.

the Shilluk themselves for everyday matters of administration. 100

Apart from these eleven Colo chiefs, three members of the Kwareth 666
are also members of the electoral college. Each *reth* appoints one of [631]
his sons to be "responsible" for the family. This son is not necessarily 643
elected *reth*—in fact we doubt whether he ever has been—but he is of 614
considerable importance. The three members of the electoral college are the descendants of the heads of three great lines of the Kwareth. Why these three should be chosen, to the exclusion of other Kwareth branches is not clear. We think they are the most important because the ancestor of each, from whom his claim to membership of the college depends, was the chief son of those three branches of the family nearest to the throne. The chief of Fadiang is regarded as in some ways chief of the Kwareth, and though the other two Kwareth members are venerable chamberlains, all the houses now eligible to produce candidates for the *reth*ship are descended directly from the sons of *reth* Nyakwac, the chief of whose sons was the ancestor of the chief of Fadiang.

Such, as far as we can disentangle it, is the theory of the con- 643
stitution of the electoral body. In practice there were certain
difficulties due, as usual to the fact that Shilluk tradition is nowhere
written down and relies upon the memories of the elder men. A [666]
comparison of the government files on the elections of 1903 and 1917
shows that the lists of chiefs forming the electoral college were more or less the same as those in 1943 and the variations were mostly accounted for by deaths, absentees etc.

The first thing that happened after the passing of *reth* Fafiti was an unofficial committee on "ways and means", whose main object seemed to be to discover what ought to be done, and who ought to do it. This process went on, more or less consciously till the end of
the installation ceremonies. It was a refreshing of the memories of
Shilluk tradition and history. At this meeting the members of the [666]
electoral college were decided upon and summoned to Fashoda.
Certain influential chiefs seemed to think it would be impossible to

● 643 elect a *reth* without help from government, but in the event no difficulties arose.

Within a week of the passing of the *reth* the members of the
643 electoral college had met at Fashoda, and many other influential
666 chiefs and notables had gathered there as well. An unanimous choice
of Anei son of Kur, the favourite of Fafiti, was made, and there seemed
to be little discussion and no opposition from outside the electoral
college.[11]

631 Several interesting points in connexion with the actual election
643 procedure were noticeable. The electors divided into three groups,
Gol Nyikang (southern Shilluk) under the chief of Kwom, Gol Dhiang
666 (northern Shilluk) under the chief of Golbainy, and the Kwareth under
the chief of Fadhiang. Agreement was first reached between the
chief of Kwom and the chief of Golbainy upon Anei as *reth*, and when
this agreement was announced to the other electors they seem to have
agreed to it without much further discussion. This is an interesting
[156] fact, and one which is not in accord with normal Shilluk practice,
where a man with decided opinions upon anything is seldom overawed
by time or place in expressing them. The Colo chiefs seem to have
lined up behind their respective leaders, the chiefs of Gol Nyikang and
Gol Dhiang, and as the choice lay in the first place with Colo, the chief
of Fadhiang, on behalf of the Kwareth, had nothing to add.

It was explained to us that the whole thing hinged upon agreement
of the chief of Gol Nyikang and the chief of Gol Dhiang. Had they
disagreed, their respective chiefs would have ranged themselves in
opposing camps. What the Kwareth would have done is difficult
to say. They said they would have followed the chief of Gol Dhiang,
maybe because Fadhiang is part of Gol Dhiang but many, if not most
Kwareth live in Gol Nyikang. On several past occasions when a
631 *reth* has been elected there has been disagreement between Gol
643 Nyikang and Gol Dhiang, presumably because the two chiefs failed
666 to reach agreement. It was the disagreement between these two
669 which produced civil war between the two halves of the country, or

---

[11] The "canvassing" of one of the sons of *reth* Fadiet never amounted to opposition.

631
government intervention in the past. As several of the electors said, 643
"If there had not been agreement between the chiefs of Gol Dhiang 666
and Gol Nyikang, we should have gone home, each behind our leader" 669
—presumably to prepare for war.

At the meetings of the electoral college etiquette was very strict, 631
and as far as we could make out, the order, in theory, was that the
chief of Gol Nyikang proposes a candidate to the chief of Gol Dhiang ; 643
no doubt this is in fact discussed privately by the two chiefs. The 666
chief of Gol Dhiang replies agreeing to the proposal (or not, as the case may be). In fact there is not much more for the other members to say, though they doubtless know before hand, and may even have some say in who is to be the candidate proposed by their chief. Should any chief or notable, outside the electoral college, be sitting at their meeting, as did in fact happen, he would be very careful not to do more than listen. He would feel it quite out of place to express an opinion, however important his position might be. We think that on the surface at least considerable honour was paid to the observance of this etiquette. It would, however, have been odd if there had not been a great deal of "lobbying."

During the interval between the death of a *reth* and the election 643
of his successor and his initial establishment in Fashoda there is an 669
awkward period in which the Shilluk feel a sense of potential danger. Custom requires that all *nyireths*, potential claimants to the throne, should remain at home. Should anyone among them wish to defy custom and try to obtain a following to instal himself in Fashoda, this is his chance. After the electoral college has agreed upon a new *reth* the chances of a pretender become much less, though the period of danger is never quite over till after the installation of the chosen *reth* by Nyikang in Fashoda. The danger from ambush, illness, or disaster attributed to the *reth* always exists.

The procedure for seizing the throne of Fashoda by force is as 643
follows. A *nyireth* who is living in a section of the Shilluk, and who 669
fancies his chances of becoming *reth*, persuades, or is persuaded by the 622
chief of his settlement or section to start an insurrection; without the co-operation of the *nyireth* and his chief an insurrection is impos-

643 sible, for only the settlement chief can call up the necessary force of
669 warriors. Equally an insurrection must centre round a *nyireth*, for
only *nyireths* are eligible to become *reths*, (It is for this reason that
[623] Shilluk custom enjoins upon all *nyireths* to remain quietly at home, as a safeguard, during an interregnum.) The procedure then varies with the fortunes of war. It seems probable that one settlement—there are some 100 settlements in the Shilluk country—would not of itself be able to start openly a campaign of violence. Should the electoral college fail to agree upon a single choice, then there would be a good chance of a pretender rallying half the kingdom to his cause, as Cuti Ajang succeeded in doing in 1917.

643 When the electoral college has settled upon a choice, the initial formalities take place very quietly, as if to avoid attracting attention. The new *reth* (who will not be *reth* in full sense till Nyikang has installed him) is brought by the chief of Gol Nyikang, traditionally after a mock duel, though we doubt whether this is obligatory. He is brought stealthily and by night, and at early dawn a bull is speared at Fashoda, and he is taken into the house favoured by his father in his life time in Fashoda, where he has to step over a sheep, held prostrate at the entrance to the house, and has a string of beads tied on to his ankle. The spearing of the bull and the tying on of the beads both symbolise his new status of what we may call *reth*-elect. We think the spearing of the bull is the more significant.

It is interesting that on this first day Anei was obviously under the stress of great emotion, natural in one who overnight, finds himself translated into the incarnation of the tribal hero, who is so closely descended from God.

631
643 Immediately on being introduced to Fashoda the *reth*-elect starts to receive the homage, unofficially and without ceremony, of the chiefs of his kingdom. They come from all parts of the country, and for a chief to fail to come would be a sign of disaffection, or at best gross discourtesy. The *reth's* brothers too all come, or should come, to
643
644 pay homage, and other *nyireths* as well. His brothers appear to bear

him no malice, though his election has practically taken away their 643
chances of becoming *reth* in future. All the same there remains 644
potential danger to the new *reth*-elect from an angry or ambitious *nyireth*
trying to ambush him by night. No armed rising is now likely, but [669]
an individual challenge remains a possibility for the *reth* till the end
of his days.

The initial ceremonies are simple, and soon over. There remains 643
an interval for the *reth*-elect, until he is installed by Nyikang. The
funeral obsequies of his predecessor are largely arranged by others, [166]
though he has a say in fixing dates and procedure.

A final word may be said upon the part played by the intervention 175
of government in this and previous elections. As explained above 643
elections have taken place in 1903 and 1917 in the time of the present 648
government, and before that there was a period of uncertainty, sometimes amounting to civil war during the Mahdia and "Turkia". There is what might be called a "traditional" tendency towards civil war at the time of the election of a *reth*, which is the customary way out of an impasse caused by the disagreement of the two "kingmakers". Since the advent of the present government steps have been taken to get the *reth* elected by peaceful means, in spite of the disagreement.

In 1903 the governor at Kodok himself presided at the election, and more or less dictated the choice of Fadiet as *reth* in place of Kur. Kur had appeared somewhat too oriental in his methods, and it was thought that Fadiet would be more amenable as a government nominee. This proved to be the case, but the fact that he was nominated by government made him of little political importance in the tribe.

In 1917 a disagreement between the king-makers threatened civil war, and the governor had to instal Fafiti and protect him by a detachment of troops. This again detracted from his importance as tribal head.

In 1943 the kingmakers reached agreement, and government

175 643 had nothing to do except to warn the Shilluk that a *reth* chosen by
648 violence would not be accepted by government.

During the interval between the death of a *reth* and the final
643 installation of a successor the Shilluk lack, in a certain degree, their
chief mediator with Nyikang and God, and the *reth*-elect lacks certain
attributes of divinity, which are bestowed upon him later by Nyikang.
Both parties express this inadequacy by certain prohibitions on their
behaviour, many of which, in the case of the *reth* at any rate, are not
signs of mourning but signs of respect to Nyikang, as they endure
till his installation, and do not in all cases cease with the wake of the
deceased. It is forbidden for Shilluk to light grass fires (except perhaps
[688] along the drying marshes, by the river banks) between the death of
one *reth* and the installation of his successor. Any offender is liable
to a fine. There are two types of building among the Shilluk; walls
341 are built from mud alone laid in circular layers, or else a framework
643 of millet stalks is first erected and then packed with mud outside
and in. The latter technique is regarded as inferior; the former is
the royal or divine style of building. Fashoda is built like that, and
all the shrines to Nyikang, *reths* and *nyireths* throughout the country.
[174] Men of substance also build their houses after this fashion, and it
seems as if this may have been the original traditional form of Shilluk
building, and the other form is looked upon as something foreign.
This royal style of building is forbidden in the same way as the burning
of grass. It is said that the prohibition upon this royal style of building
is a sign of respect to Nyikang; "you must not build in Nyikang's
style, while Nyikang's houses are down". Nyikang's houses are not
[778] actually thrown down, except the great shrine of Fanyikang, but
[346] each shrine of Nyikang is rebuilt by each new *reth*, or should be; and
there is a general feeling that there is a rebirth of the whole Nyikang
tradition at the installation of a *reth*. During the period of the
interregnum there is a general feeling that something has passed away
from the Shilluk, and requires renewing by Nyikang's reappearance,
and until Nyikang himself has come to renew his contact with the
Shilluk the people mark the interval by abstaining from building in
the way they associate with Nyikang. Building of the inferior style

does not count. It has been suggested that the prohibition of grass 341 643
fires may spring from this prohibition upon building; it is necessary,
if the building season is to start late, to preserve the grass for roofing. [182]
Out of respect for Nyikang it is also forbidden for the Shilluk to indulge [628]
in inter-sectional fighting, or possibly from fear of his wrath.

Several other prohibitions govern the *reth's* own behaviour: he 643
may not sit upon the ambatch mattress, favoured by the Shilluk, [352]
until his installation, and his movements are considerably restricted.
There is great importance attached to watercourses by the Shilluk, [823]
and until his installation the *reth* found himself unable to cross west
of the big *khor* beside Fanyikang, which joins the Nile just downstream of the shrine of Nyikang.

To the north of Fashoda, he was "afraid of going too close to Nyikang". In fact he found any suggestion that he should travel north of Mal near Detwok uncomfortable. The importance attaching to *khors* is not confined to the two at Fanyikang and Mal. Whenever the new *reth* comes to a *khor*, before crossing it, he must step over a sheep, held prostrate in the bed, before he can cross. This sheep must be brought from the nearest village, but if a death has recently occurred in the village, or no one can be found to lend a sheep a sheaf of grass will do instead.

PART III—THE INSTALLATION OF ANEI KUR

There are various preliminaries to the installation of the *reth* by Nyikang. Many materials necessary for the ceremonies have to be collected, and apparatus has to be made.

The most important is the expedition to *pothe manyo* (or raiding [173]
country), and northwards to the country traditionally conquered,
though more probably merely raided, by Dak, the son of Nyikang.
Two small sections are responsible for this embassy. The subsection
of Akwobai in Kwom (Gol Nyikang), and the small section of Abwor
in Mwomo (Gol Dhiang), are responsible for obtaining silver and cloth [431]
from the north, and as they go north they solicit gifts from Shilluk
villages by the way.

643 villages by the way. One of the most noticeable features of the activities surrounding Nyikang is the principle that he and his lieutenants are given, or take, what they want from Shilluk as they pass. This [173] embassy to the north may well have its origin in a raiding party, and the two sections, whose duty it is to perform this journey, may have been obliged to render this form of military service to Nyikang. [177] Nowadays the silver and the cloth which were originally plunder, are bought from Kosti with money supplied by the *reth*, and contributed [437] by Shilluk north of Kaka. Other requirements are ostrich feathers procured from the country round Kaka for the head pieces of the images of Nyikang and Dak, by the people of Mwomo, and ivory for bracelets to be worn by various functionaries at the installation itself. This was provided from the tusks of elephants slain by the Shilluk in 1938.[18] They are very rare in Shilluk country. Bamboo is brought from Fungor in the eastern Nuba Mountains for the bodies of Nyikang's image, and those of his sons Dak and Cal. This is brought by the [283] people of Akwobai. Certain sacred ropes made from the fibre of dom palms, which grow round Fanyikang, are brought by "Dak", who with his followers makes a special pilgrimage some two months before the ceremonies.

643 224 292 An obligation lies on the chiefs of Fanyikang to produce skins of the female Mrs. Gray antelope from Fanyikang Island. These are required as the high robes of honour of the *reth*. They are worn by the *reth* himself and all the important people in the ceremony. To be presented with a Mrs. Gray skin is a mark of the greatest esteem. They are royal game, and are only killed in the first year of a new *reth's* reign. On this occasion doubtless to save any complications with the government, which strictly preserves these antelopes, the operation was all over before the administration had word of it.

643 356 The houses of Fashoda had to be tidied up and new fences built, but no new building in mud was done.

---

[136] [18] In 1938 a few elephants invaded Shilluk country near Malakal, for the first time for many years.

There were various dignitaries created *jagos* or chiefs responsible 643
for separate small ceremonies. These had all to be appointed. They
were old female *nyireths*, specially appointed, who looked after certain
shrines of Nyikang.

An interesting ceremony was the lighting of the fire for the special 643
blacksmiths, Kwanyikang from Golbainy, to make the sacred spears. 782
It took place in the middle of January. A rough grass shelter was [372
built on the clear ground east of Fashoda, and a white bull with brown
markings was brought up for slaughter, and a black cow calf from 326]
the sacred herd of Nyikang. This was not for slaughtering, but was
given to the Kwanyikang to take home. It and its offspring will
remain the kine of Nyikang. A brown sheep is also brought.

Some little way off from the shelter the blacksmiths' implements, bellows, anvils, hammers etc., were brought out and laid upon a bull skin. When all was ready the implements were moved with great care to beside the shelter where they were laid out on the bull skin once more. Then the cow calf was completely draped in cloth, great care being taken to see that it was blind-folded. The bull calf and sheep were all tethered close to the shelter, and the spectators, including the *reth*, who took no part, stood round in a semicircle.

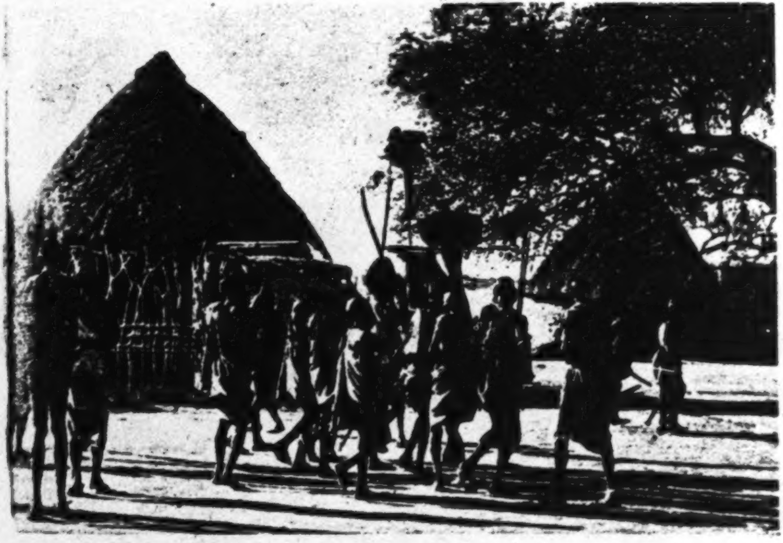
Two spears, sacred to Nyikang were brought down from the [778]
mound Aturwic, and a part of the sheep's right ear was cut off with
one of the spears. This ear was said to assist the making of the fire.
It was placed with some tinder upon a hearth beside the shelter, and [372]
the butt of a fish spear twirled and fire made. The sparks were nursed
and taken into the shelter, where they were fanned into a fire. Then
a piece was cut from the right ear of the bull, and put into a small
gourd. A little bull's blood was also drained into the gourd. A
blacksmith seized a hammer and hit the bull a blow on the base of
the skull. The bull fell at once. Two more blows were delivered,
and as it was about to die an incision was made in its throat with a
spear, and the blood drawn off in gourds. The small gourd was said
to be a libation to Nyikang, the large gourds full of blood were said

THE MARCH OF NYIKANG AND DAK TO NYIGIR.

291
482
643
778

1.—Dak leads, borne by his bearers. Nyikang follows. Behind is the forked branch known as "Nyikang's bed" and the basket which holds his food.

[342]



2.—Nyikang and Dak leave the village of *Reth* Fafiti.

[FACING p. 40]

643 to be for the Kwanyikang to drink. The preliminaries were then
782 complete for the forging of the spears to be used in the installation.
They numbered about fifty.

778 The Shilluk say that Nyikang disappeared in a whirlwind, and
643 since then Akurwa has been a place of especial sanctity. Nyikang
[173] is liable to re-appear at any time, in a variety of different forms and
[775] at any place in Shilluk country, but since Akurwa was the scene of his
departure, it is also the most likely place for his return. There are
many shrines of Nyikang in Shilluk country, but Akurwa is by far
the most important and it is there that the effigies of Nyikang and
Dak are kept. These effigies are not merely symbols. They may
"become active" at any time, and when active they are Nyikang
and Dak. The effigy of Nyikang is rarely taken on a journey in
normal times, though it is often brought out to dance during religious
festivals at Akurwa itself. The effigy of Dak makes periodical ex-
643 cursions through the country. Both effigies have an important part
775 to play in the ceremonies of installation. The soul of Nyikang is
778 manifest in the effigy for the occasion, and he must march from Akurwa
to Fashoda to test the qualities of his new successor and to install
him at the capital. This march, the opposition shown by the *reth*
and the final ritual performed at Fashoda are the essence of the install-
ation ceremonies. The symbolic substitution on the sacred stool[13]
of the *reth*-elect for the effigy is the principal method by which the
soul of Nyikang is transferred.

THE PROGRESS OF NYIKANG FROM AKURWA TO NYIGIR.

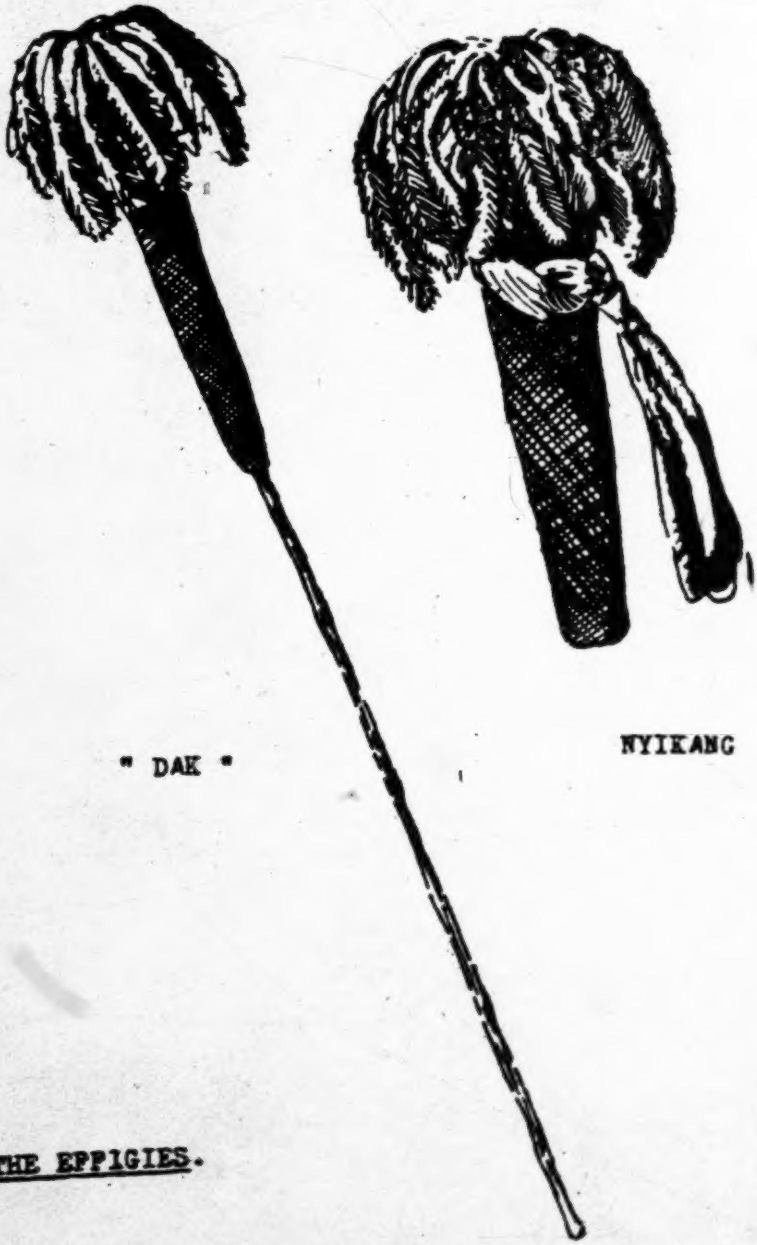
643 As the time of the installation drew near, it was plain that there
778 had been some delay. Nyikang was expected to arrive at Fashoda
by the new moon of February 24th 1944. But as the old moon waned
there were nothing b[illegible] rumours that he had started and others that
he had not. This was worrying to those around the *reth*, for tradition
has it that if Nyikang disapproves of the *reth* he may become too heavy

---

[13] Described in Part III, pp. 61 ff.

FIG. 3.

643
778



THE EFFIGIES.

[FACING p. 41]

to lift. However the delay was quite simply explained. Nyikang 643
was not ready. A hitch had occurred in finding the cloth for his body. 778
(A new effigy of Nyikang is made for each *reth*, and on the death of a *reth* the old effigy is destroyed). Another delay was caused by the Ororo messengers sent from Fashoda to Akurwa to say that all was ready. They dawdled on the way.

On the 26th February "Nyikang" and "Dak" started on their way. First they must beat the bounds of Shilluk country proper, and they went to Moro, some five miles north of Kaka market. The procession was first observed in the section of "Thorr" just south of Kaka.

Nyikang and Dak are carried by men of the Kwanyikwom clan, [614]
who live at Akurwa. They are surrounded by the youths of the Kwanyikwom carrying whips to drive away the inquisitive or profane. As Nyikang passes through a section of the Shilluk country, the men of the section escort him to their borders. Anyone who is beaten by 643
the whips of the Kwanyikwom is said to be held to ransom until he 688
pays a fine of a goat. There are various offences for which Nyikang 778
penalizes people on the way. Nyikang's image is made from ostrich feathers and bamboo. It is therefore sacrilege for a Shilluk to be seen with an ostrich feather in his hair or carrying bamboo. The ritual [764]
of burial must be completed for all who have recently died. Nyikang must not pass anything unclean. In Nyikang's presence Shilluk must not present a warlike appearance. A man carrying a spear may not have a shield as well, and a man with a shield is only allowed a millet stalk. Nyikang advances with his son Dak at a loping trot 643
of about 6 m.p.h. escorted by the Kwanyikwom and the men of the 778
section through which he is passing. As he approaches a village the [481]
people dash out as if to ward him off, but quickly over-powered they soon join the procession. It is usual for gifts of a sheep or a goat to [431]
be presented to or exacted by Nyikang, and it was noticeable how all small stock and fowls were either shut up or driven away from the vicinity of Nyikang, for Nyikang has a right to anything he fancies. As Nyikang proceeds with Dak his son beside him, the escort chants

As Nyikang proceeds with Dak [illegible] beside him, the escort chants
643 the songs of Nyikang and Dak recounting their exploits of conquest.
778 From time to time Nyikang turns round and dances back as if to
[533] threaten those following. When he does this, Dak rushes ahead, carried in a charging position, his body held horizontally pointed like a spear, and Nyikang himself is carried 'at the slope'. The place where Nyikang spends the night is unpredictable. He does not move much after sunset, and normally spends the night in a shrine.

Nyikang was observed at rest at Moro, the northern limit of his
[417] progress, obviously propped up upon his "bed", a long forked stick with a leather flap hanging from the fork. He was inside the fence of the large shrine, and outside under three large *heglig* trees, sacred to Nyikang, the people of Moro and the Kwanyikwom were dancing in his honour.

The dancing at Moro was of a usual type. The dancers dancing
[536] in an anti-clockwise direction around the drums of Nyikang. The
[533] burden of most of the songs was the conquest of the "Funy" and their ejection from Shilluk country. It was thought that Nyikang would stay two nights at Moro, but he was late and in a hurry. He left that same afternoon and returned to Akurwa on the 28th. On the 29th he started for Fashoda.

Nyikang was next observed at Golbainy south of Kodok on the 6th March. (He is said to have stayed in the following places—1.3.44 Nun, 2.3.44 Adod Thuro, 3.3.44 Athodwoi, 4.3.44 Detwok (Pabiu), 5.3.44 Kodok (Ninmal).) When Nyikang spends the night at a village,
[574] the houses must be vacated by the villagers for the Kwanyikwom, who have also a right to be fed.

On the 6th March Nyikang arrived before midday at the village of *reth* Fafiti in Golbainy, where he spent the heat of the day. We arrived shortly after Nyikang and observed that he had been put into one of *reth* Fafiti's houses (not the tomb). There were dances around
533 the big *heglig* tree in the village similar to the dances at Moro. A large
535 contingent of female *bangreth* were the most obvious element led by
643 the senior *bareth*. The little drums of Nyikang were beaten under

the tree, and the boys and young men danced round with millet stalks, 533
while the women clustered in the middle round the drums. The usual 535
songs of Nyikang and of the various *reths* were sung, and we observed 643
the *pas seuls* by *bangreth* with or without swords, often in little groups
of five or six old women. There was no dancing inside the fence surrounding
the tomb, and the crowd was noticeably small, consisting
only of Kwanyikwom and a *few* surrounding villagers. At 3.30 p.m.
there was no activity in the village, and we thought Nyikang must
have gone. However, when an old woman who was sitting in the
shade of a house was asked, she said "of course he *is* still here; are
you fool enough to suppose our king would travel in this heat?"
Shortly before 4.00 p.m. the Kwanyikwom began to collect, and a
contingent of Ororo from Yoiny were drawn up near by. At 4.00 p.m.
a bugler stood up from where he had been sitting in the shade of a [204]
byre and blew a call. Some moments later two drummers, each
carrying one of the drums of Nyikang, appeared from the house where
Nyikang was and beat a tattoo. Then another call on the bugle and
the Kwanyikwom, kneeling down, started singing the songs of Nyikang. [514]
Later they got up and, joined by the Ororo and the children of the
village, danced a solemn measure before the house where Nyikang
was staying. Grown men of the Kwanyikwom danced out in front
before the door with swords or millet stalks, and we noticed one man
with an Ingessana throwing-knife. Soon men brought out from
inside the fence some bundles of tightly packed grass, and some ropes
made of *dom* fibre. They hung the ropes upon the fence and laid the
grass bundles against it on the side of the opening opposite to where
the drummers were standing. Shortly afterwards two men carrying [482]
baskets of food upon their heads appeared, and two others wound
the ropes over their shoulders and round their waists. By this time
there was considerable movement inside the fence. The two spears
of Nyikang were raised up, and the forked stick upon which Nyikang
sleeps. Then Dak appeared and behind him Nyikang himself. The 535
two images posed for a moment or two while the company danced 643
before them. Dak led off the procession at the usual jog trot, and they 778
proceeded round the village to the beat of the drums, stopping at each

535 of *reth* Fafiti's houses, searching for him in the way the dancers had
643 done at the funeral dance. They stopped before each house while
776 the dancers danced up to them. They spent rather longer in front
of the tomb of Fafiti, and then suddenly moved off on their way with
all their following.

643 They passed the village of the new *reth*, paying no attention to
it, and went direct to the village of the chief of Golbainy (and all Gol
776 Dhiang). Some 150 yards north of the village the images stopped,
[533] and the company prayed to them and sang. They approached the
village from the side away from the road, but, instead of dancing
[535] straight in, they stopped on the threshold, and the people of the village,
led by the chief, danced up to them as if to ward them off, and then
quickly retired. The chief was called up, and then went off to his
[415 house. He brought a small grass mat (one foot square used for cover-
ing pots as a protection from flies), a small piece of rope,[14] and put
285] them on the ground. Dak and Nyikang stepped over the mat and
rope and entered the village. A short dance round the village followed
of the usual pattern, with Nyikang and Dak taking part. After a
little Nyikang and Dak took up a position before the house which had
been prepared for them in case they should wish to spend the night.
The congregation sat down before them and sang songs. The women
[533 sat with heads averted from Nyikang. The refrain of the most popular
539] song was:—

"Let the Dervish wreak his will,
Nyikang's land will prosper still."

643 The chief was called once more and had a secret talk with Dak.
It is the tradition that Nyikang presents the chief of Golbainy on every
installation with a spear, because originally Nyikang invested his
[755] forebear with a spear of office. The alleged original spear is still
used to cure disease. A piece of goat's ear is cut off with the spear
and tied on the patient's ankle. The chief first provided a cattle

---

[14] This may have been a pledge for the gift of sheep or a bull, or instead of a sheep for Nyikang to step over on entering the village.

rope, a pledge of a bull for Nyikang and his people, and then produced 643 an old blackened spear from his house, of unusual type among the Shilluk. After a show of reluctance he accepted a new spear. He later explained that the show of reluctance was due to the fact that the new spear was not an exact replica of the original. We were shown several spears which had been presented at previous installations, and then one was brought out which was the "original." But an old woman sitting by said "Nonsense, that is the one Nyikang presented when *reth* Yor was installed."

After the spear had been presented, the procession moved off to Nyigir. As before, on leaving Golbainy the people of Golbainy left the procession and their places were taken by the people of Nyigir, who grew in number as Nyikang reached the village of Adodo in Nyigir, where he was to stay till the installation.

Nyikang, led by Dak, approached Adodo from the back and drew 643
up outside the village while their following sang songs. Then a sheep 778
was brought and tied in the middle of the village by the legs. Nyikang [533
and Dak stepped over it, and Nyikang danced over to the house pre-
pared for him and went in. Dak stayed outside for some time, dancing 535]
around, faster and faster, charging people who got in his way, until finally he too disappeared into the house.

THE RETH'S FLIGHT TO DEBALO

(P.P.H.)

The march of Nyikang from Akurwa to Nyigir was ended. He 643 and Dak surrounded by the Kwanyikwom and other followers were safely installed in the village of Adodo. They would take their rest there for three days.

Meanwhile the *reth* had anxiously awaited their arrival but had not moved from the confines of Fashoda. In the early hours of the [644] morning after Nyikang had reached Adodo, the *reth* secretly moved to Debalo which is a few miles south of the capital. He was accompanied

643 [648] by a number of his wives carrying his personal luggage and his food, and with him also were some of his personal bodyguard. During his three days seclusion at Debalo, the *reth* is said to be in especial danger of attack by his rivals, and extra precautions are taken for his safety.

We were told—but did not see at close quarters—that fires are [322] ceremonially lit and that fire-sticks were used for this purpose. There are three possible explanations of this; that the fire is lit as a ritual act and as part of the initiation of the *reth*; the Shilluk expression *pic mac* suggests some form of symbolic purification or initiation, for it is an expression used in that context by other Nilotics; that fires were lit round the confines of the village as an added precaution against marauders; or merely numerous fires lit to cook the meat of sacrifice. [114] Both the latter explanations are suggested by Munro in his account of the installation of *reth* Fafiti in 1917.

Whether the lighting of fires was a precautionary measure of security, a ritual act, or merely for purposes of feasting, the measures taken to safeguard the *reth* were manifest in other ways. A special homestead had been built for his reception in fine style with the eight cross-ties which are a symbol of royalty. It was situated in a particularly ostentatious position in the village of Debalo. But the *reth* did not occupy it. Instead, in order to deceive his enemies, he took up residence in a very ramshackle hut, which had no embellishments whatever.

643 776 The *reth's* stay at Debalo is not truly a period of seclusion. He has removed himself from all possible contact with Nyikang or his followers from the northern division of Gol Dhiang, but holds court among his own supporters, who flock in to pay homage from the division of Gol Nyikang. As yet we have formed no definite conclusions as to why the *reth* moves so hurriedly to Debalo as soon as Nyikang reaches Nyigir. Shilluk say that the *reth* has "fled" from Nyikang, and that he sends messengers to Nyikang beseeching him to stay away. It may be that this is considered a suitable sign of humility in accepting the office of *reth* of the Shilluk. Nyikang's attitude of arrogant

resentment at the new *reth's* presumption in occupying Fashoda at all 643
becomes apparent later in the ceremonies. It is possible that Nyikang 776
is believed to resent the unwarranted seizure of his powers by a person
who may be unworthy of the trust. This complex attitude is one of
the main problems of the installation, for it is undoubtedly an attitude
which conditions the behaviour of the *reth* later in the ceremonies,
and is the object of the two battles fought out by the opposing armies.

Meanwhile further preparations for the final ceremonies were 643
being made. The small grass huts called *adul*, which form the
temporary camp outside the shrine of Nyikang at Fashoda, were built
by the chief of Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang. This camp is used at
a later period in the installation ceremonies, but it had to be built
previously by these chiefs who are traditionally responsible for its
erection. It is not built by orders of the chiefs to their own followers,
though the latter bring in the materials, but with their own hands.

On the evening of the last day at Fashoda a procession arrived 643
from Lul and passed through Debalo. This was the party responsible 778
for bringing the spear of Nyikang and with it the sacred beads, which
are said to have been part of the bride-wealth of Adwai, daughter
of Nyikang, who married a man from the Nuba Mountains. The
beads came from the shrine of Nyikang at Ocoro in Lul, and were guarded
by the oldest and largest of Nyikang's spears, which was, like all
really sacred objects among the Shilluk, wrapped in white cloth. They [644]
were carried on the head of a *nyireth* (a daughter of a *reth*) specially
appointed for the purpose. They are said to be red and green, cylindrical
and about half an inch long, but we were not allowed to see them.
According to tradition, the *nyireth* and one of the *bang reth* hold a vigil
by night over the beads in one of the huts called Araic on the
sacred mound Aturwic. If one of the beads presents itself with a hole [787]
through *it*, the phenomenon is considered a good omen, and next
morning it is threaded and tied to the *reth's* ankle. If no hole is found
the omen is bad, but the bead is tied to the *reth's* ankle all the same.
This ritual takes place the night after the installation of the new *reth*
on the sacred stool of the Shilluk, but it takes place in strict secrecy.

643 We did not witness the selection of the bead. During the *reth's* stay
[778] at Debalo the period of amnesty for adulterers and seducers, which
is mentioned by Munro, comes into effect. Adulterers and seducers
of unmarried girls are able to avoid the *full* legal consequences of their
[684 sins by paying a small fine in goats and sheep to the *reth*. A few
676] Shilluk took advantage of this, and some thirty sheep and goats were
brought in.

During the period of semi-seclusion, apart from the preparation, both parties remained comparatively inactive. After three days all was ready for the final and public phases of the installation ceremonies.

THE INSTALLATION CEREMONIES.

631 The conventional opposition between the northern and southern
643 divisions, of the country Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang, now becomes
616 clearer. The boundary between them is the watercourse called
Arepojur, which means "the gathering of the peoples", and which lies about half a mile to the south of Fashoda. Headed by the chief of Gol Nyikang, chiefs, warriors and headmen had been flocking in to Debalo to join forces with the *reth*-elect, and it is their traditional duty to guard him and to support him in his struggles with Nyikang. Nyikang has taken up residence at Adodo a few miles north of Fashoda, and the people who live north of the boundary muster to his aid. The three days semi-seclusion of the *reth* at Debalo and Nyikang at Adodo is thus primarily a period of preparation for the mock battle to come. The march of the *reth* from Debalo and Nyikang from Adodo and their meeting on the high ground above Arepojur symbolises the ceremonial division of the country into two moieties. The balance between them is strongly emphasised at all points. Nyikang must have his shield borne by a special bearer; so must the *reth*. Certain ritual objects, spears, beads, and the like must accompany the *reth*; others must be carried with Nyikang. Moreover, the joining in battle of the two parties, the capture of the *reth*, and the subsequent rites and ceremonies is an occasion in which all classes and sections of the Shilluk participate, and the *formal* election and installation of the new

reth is ceremonially impressed upon the minds of all his people. It is 616 the occasion when the *reth* is formally recognised by the Shilluk as a 634 whole. The public nature of the ceremony must be emphasized be- 643 cause prior to it, only limited sections of society—Kwareth, Ororo and the Colo chiefs—have been concerned.

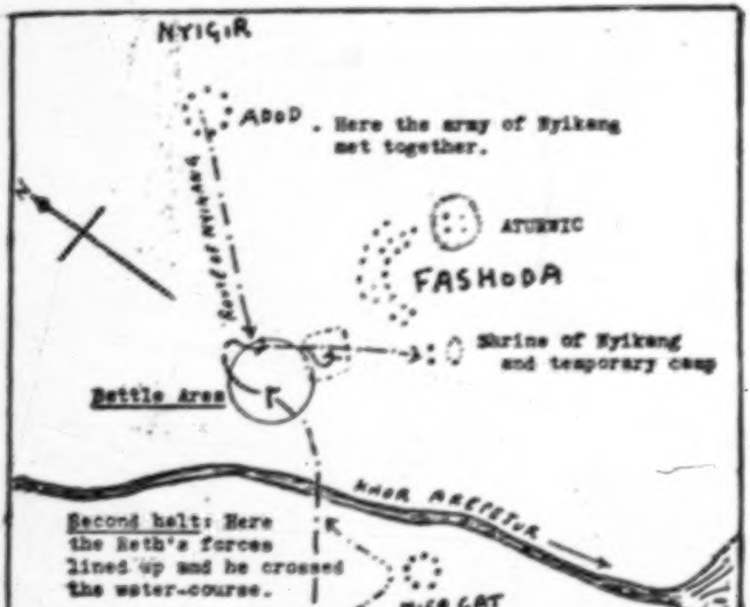
The ceremonies which are enacted on this day are divided into 643 four distinct phases with a variety of ritual observance in each :-

1. The simultaneous march of the opposing armies to the high ground immediately south-west of Fashoda, and the mock battle which follows.
2. The capture of the *reth* by Nyikang, and the procession to the shrine of Nyikang in Fashoda.
3. The enthronement of the effigy of Nyikang on the sacred stool, the substitution of the *reth* for Nyikang on the stool, and the possession of the *reth* by the spirit of Nyikang.
4. The retirement of the *reth* into the temporary camp, which is specially built for the occasion on the open ground immediately facing the shrine.
5. The ritual lighting of new fire by the Ororo and Kwereth just before sundown.

The first two phases are public and concern the tribe as a whole. The third phase, which retains a degree of mystery, is witnessed by limited sections of the population from outside and is screened even from them by a canopy. The *reth's* retirement into the temporary camp concerns him and certain traditional functionaries alone, and the rites which follow are carried out in strict secrecy. The fire-making ceremony concerns chiefly the inhabitants of Fashoda and the *reth's* immediate followers.

The main events of each phase are described from the records of all the observers who attended. We have deliberately avoided an over-detailed description of the events and behaviour of the participants,

FIG. 4.


NYIGIR
ADOD
Here the army of Nyikang met together.
Route of NYIKANG
ATURWIC
FASHODA
Shrine of Nyikang and temporary camp
Battle Area
KHOR ARETETUR
Second halt: Here the Reth's forces lined up and he crossed the water-course.
MIER GAT
(Village where warriors collected millet stalks for the battle)
Route of RETH'S ARMY
Merchant's shop
First halt: a small shrine since erected here.
AKWABAI
KWOM
DEBALO
Here the Reth's army formed up before the start.

SKETCH-MAP SHOWING AREA OF INSTALLATION CEREMONIES.

[FACING P 50]

643 for the really significant rites would thus be lost. More detailed descriptions and explanations are recorded in the Notes with numbered references in the text.

THE RETH'S MARCH FROM DEBALO TO AREPEJUR.

On the morning of March 11th, the *reth* was still at Debalo, and his warriors, together with some of the chiefs of the south who had come in to pay homage to him the day before, began to assemble in the village. By 8 a.m. there were large clusters of them seated in the shade around the houses ready to move off when the *reth* was ready. At this point of the proceedings we were told that the Kwa Okelo, who should have been at Debalo by then, were not ready, and that they were known to be mustering at their village which is only a mile from Debalo. There were obvious signs of preparation within the *reth's* hut, but we saw nothing of significance except the sheep and goats which had been taken that morning from the self-confessed adulterers and seducers of girls. The sheep and goats were brought to the *reth's* house in charge of four men but they were driven back to the cattle byre from which they had been brought after a few minutes. Meanwhile a message had been sent out to the Kwa Okelo to tell them to hurry and to bring with them the small girl (*nya kwer*), (Note 7) who plays so important a part in the ceremonies.

About an hour and half later the Kwa Okelo could be seen in the distance to the south of Debalo. Behind them and mustering in another village were the Kwa Ojul. Both parties began to move off in the direction of Debalo. On their arrival they drew up in close formation outside the village and near to the *reth's* hut. They were
533 carrying spears but no shields and were singing songs. The gist of these songs was that Nyikang had returned with the wind. In the midst of the Kwa Okelo a small cluster of women could be seen and among them *nya kwer*, and in front of them was a single man who carried aloft a small basket covered with a grass mat, doubtless *nya kwer's* "luggage." The Kwa Okelo marched into Debalo, but the Kwa Ojul remained outside and did not join the procession until the

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

THE FIRST DAY OF THE INSTALLATION.

241
342
643

1.—DEBALO. Just before the march to Fashoda.
The reth dressed in white with a dark sash is standing outside his quarters awaiting the gathering of his warriors.

643

2.—[illegible]. Casting the black bull over which the reth must step before the crossing.

[FACING P. 51]

reth had left his house, when they drew up on the north side of the 643
village to take over the heifer which traditionally they must lead backwards from Debalo to Fashoda. This heifer, a brown one, had been brought into the village previously, and was already tethered in the centre. The Kwa Ojul, however, had brought with them the sheep over which the *reth* must step at Khor Arepejur.

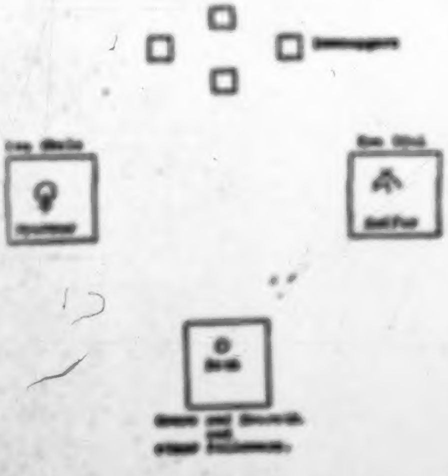
Meanwhile the *reth's* body-guard and the Ororo were clustering [644]
round the entrance to the *reth's* hut. It was difficult to see any definite formation of clans at this point, and there was some confusion about positions, but the Kwa Okelo, and with them *Nya kwer*, who was completely surrounded by women, were in the centre of the village. Jago Yolsiker Ajang, the chief of Gol Nyikang, was much in evidence and dressed in a *Mrs.* Gray antelope skin (Note 8), and it was presumably his traditional duty to get the assembly into some order.

From out of the *reth's* compound there first came his women [644]
attendants who had accompanied him from Fashoda and carried with them cooking materials and food in baskets (Note 9). Immediately after this the assembly drew up in roughly semi-circular formation facing the *reth's* hut and began to clap and sing in honour of the *reth*. The *reth* then appeared at the door of the homestead, and, stepping over a white sheep which had been pegged down in front of him, he stood with his back to the fence facing the multitude. The spear, wrapped [78]
in white cloth, and which together with the beads of Ororo is collectively known as Nyikang was brought out and held beside him. After much singing and acclamation the *reth* moved forward and, heavily guarded by the Ororo, took up his position in the centre of the village. The procession was then ready to start. Kwa Ojul, who never came into the centre of the village, began to drag the heifer backwards at the front of the procession, but abandoned the attempt lower down the slope. Thenceforth it was led in the normal way, but scarcely visible for the crowds who surrounded it. The party then moved off in the direction of Fashoda, and a white bull, which had been tethered in the centre of the village alongside the heifer already mentioned,

643 was cast and slaughtered. The procession did not move far. A violent quarrel broke out between the clansmen of Kwa Okelo and Kwa Mal.
578 The argument arose over the privilege of sowing cowry shells in the
619 *reth's* path on his journey to Fashoda. Kwa Mal maintained that
643 it was their traditional right to do so, but Jago Yoleiker had given the shells to the Kwa Okelo. The Kwa Mal considered themselves slighted, and *nyireth* Nyawelo, the eldest son of the late *reth*, who attempted to intervene, seemed to aggravate the dispute rather than settle it. Finally the custom of sowing cowry shells was abandoned altogether, as there was a complete deadlock between the parties concerned.

The procession then moved on its way down the slope to the
578 plain below, singing and beating spear-shafts together as they went.
643 Again they halted, and here another argument arose, this time over the shield of Nyikang, which should be carried before the *reth* (Note 10), and which had been forgotten. Informants stated that this was a small shield slightly larger than those carried by girls at play, but smaller than a fighting shield. Eventually an ordinary battle shield was produced as a substitute, and the shield-bearer took up his position in front of the *reth*. The party moved on, Kwa Ojul on the right and Kwa Okelo parallel on the left, in front of them the *reth's* messengers and behind the main body of followers surrounding the *reth* himself :—

643



The assembly had by then formed up in better order, which they retained until the *reth* stopped for refreshment. Thereafter the high grass at the side of the narrow track precluded the original formation, and Kwa Ojul went ahead, followed by Kwa Okelo, and the *reth* and the main body of the people behind. 643

On reaching the outskirts of Akwabal about half a mile from Debalo, the first messenger of the *reth* ran ahead to bear news to Nyikang of the *reth*'s approach. The *reth's* messengers are said to be Kwa Otwot, and it would follow that they are members of one clan in fact they are chosen from many clans (Note 11). [614 202]

Shortly after the despatch of the first messenger, the *reth* retired to the Arab merchant's shop for rest and refreshment, and the crowds squatted down on the grass ahead. After an interval of ten minutes, the *reth* came out again, and, walking fast, took up his position with the Ororo and Kwareth once more, and the procession moved off again in the direction of Fashoda. By this time the party had reached Khor Arepejur and spread out in a long line several ranks deep and parallel to the watercourse. The crowd was obviously larger than at Debalo, for people had been joining in en route, and late-comers had caught up. Others broke away and ran off to nearby villages, where they left their spears and collected millet stalks for the struggle with Nyikang which was to follow.

THE CROSSING OF THE WATERCOURSE.

On the opposite side of the watercourse Jago Thabo, the titular *chief of Gol Dhiang*, with a small party of warriors had arrived to hand over the black ball, over which the *reth* must step before crossing Arepejur, and bearing with them a fish spear wrapped round with a grass mat, another of the many sacred spears of Nyikang. On the other side also were two members of the Kwa Mal carrying a chicken with which they swept the path of the *reth* after he had crossed over.

Just before the *reth* and his followers reached the watercourse a "dust-devil" was seen whirling down towards Fashoda and this was [773 787 821]

643 773 787 821 a significant omen to the Shilluk, for they say that Nyikang disappeared in a dust-storm and returns with the wind.

Meanwhile those warriors who had run off to fetch millet stalks had rejoined the ranks of the *reth's* army and already the dust raised by the host of Nyikang marching down towards Fashoda could be seen in the distance. Finally the army of Nyikang appeared on the horizon just west of Fashoda, the feathered head of Nyikang in their midst and Dak towering above them. At this point a messenger ran forward to Nyikang bearing a message from the *reth*. This man made two journeys between the opposing forces and returned for the second time just before the *reth* crossed the watercourse (Note 12). The *reth*, who had been standing at the head of his forces and immediately behind his shield-bearer, then walked forward and, holding the small girl *nya kwer* by the hand, stepped over the sheep which had been cast on the ground in front of him, advanced a few paces, and stepped right over the black bull which lay bound on the very edge of the watercourse, and then walked swiftly across to the other side.

THE MARCH OF NYIKANG FROM ADODO NYIGIR TO FASHODA.

The simultaneous advance on Fashoda by Nyikang, Dak and their followers is described by the Rev. D. McClure as follows:-

"On the morning of the induction of the Shilluk king at Fashoda we went early to the village of Adodo, in the district of Nyigir, to watch the procession of Nyikang and Dak from Adodo to Fashoda, a distance of about two miles. We arrived at the village about 7 a.m., and found the place filled with men (the women keeping to their houses), and most of them gathered about a small black bull, which was being peacefully brushed with grass and the horns brightened with oil. Then a group of twelve young men called the Golbany led the bull outside the village, and made ready to start for Fashoda. They waited until three old men appeared from the huts, in which Nyikang and Dak
778 were residing, each carrying a sacred spear, which they carried with the spearhead upwards; and the spear handle was never allowed to

touch the ground, but always rested on the foot of the bearer when 643
he stopped[15]. These three men took their place at the head of the [778]
"bull procession", and started for Fashoda.

We were told that as soon as they reached Khor Arepejur in front of Fashoda they would send messengers back to our village of Adodo and others ahead to the village of Debalo, where the king-to-be-inducted was residing. Then when the messengers arrived at the respective villages the two processions would start simultaneously from the villages about equal distance from Fashoda to meet at Khor Arepejur for the final ceremony.

After the Golbany and the old men left, preparations were made [782]
for a sacrifice inside the enclosure in front of the houses where reside
Nyikang and Dak. I noticed that no one passed these houses without [778
bowing low and saying *Kwa dibong*, which in modern parlance would 576
be "Your Honour". A small ram was brought, and then was killed 788]
by having its throat cut. This ceremony was attended by only a few
of the people gathered in the village, and the others did not seem to
pay much attention to it. A few minutes later, however, a female
goat was brought and tied to the enclosure, on the outside, and all
the men in the village gathered and sat on the ground in an attitude
of utmost respect, every man with his feet under him and the backs
of his hands touching the ground in front of him. Most of the people [793]
in the village were the custodians of Nyikang and Dak and had been
accompanying them on the eight-day march from the village of Akurwa, which is the traditional home of these gods. None of these men carried spears, but all were armed with whips of Nyikang, which is rather a testimony that these gods do not need clubs and spears to protect them, but men armed as women are sufficient to overcome all opposition. There were about sixty men in the group from the village of Akurwa led by their chief. As the young female goat baa-ed, one of the old men in the group addressed it thus, "why do you cry, are you not

---

[15] This was the practice with all sacred spears, and the images of Dak and Cal as well. Nyikang of course was never put on the ground.

643 happy to be given to *Kwaa*[16]? Perhaps you too are praying just as we are? Do you know *Kwaa*? He is there being guarded; soon he will come out and start his journey." Then the old man addressed Nyikang, "*Kwaa*, you are great; we are all your children, even this goat, and we are here to serve you." Then the goat was led away. I asked about the goat and they said it would not be killed, but would return to the flock as a sign that all the flocks belonged to Nyikang.

About this time I heard one of the young men say he was thirsty
[273] and when I jokingly asked him if there was no beer in the village for
them, he said that no beer would be drunk that day in all the land,
until after the king had been inducted at Fashoda.

I asked about the gods and they said they were being prepared
for the journey and soon would come out of the houses. The houses
were not shrines but belonged to the chief of the village, and nothing
had been done to them except a new fence of cornstalks built around
[778] the door. I asked if I might go inside the enclosure, and when no
one objected, I entered the *kal*, and found six men seated on the ground
and two sacred drums one on each side of the door of the house, each
on a cow skin. I took some pictures of the *kal* with the men and drums,
but when I suggested that I enter the house where Nyikang resided,
they demurred, and one man took up a position against the mat door,
to bar my entrance.

At 8.50 the two drums were beaten five or six strokes each, and I thought things were going to start, but all the people bowed themselves to the ground and said, "*Kwaa* speaks. *Kwaa*, you are great *Kwaa*, speak to us."

533 Five minutes later, two young men came out of the *kal* carrying
643 the sacred drums (small black drums not unlike kettle drums), and
each sat on a cow-skin and alternately beat his drum with the handle
[534 of a hippo-hide whip. (These drums they call *thom*). The beat was
778] not that of a dance, but a regular tum, ta, ta, ta, tum; repeated over

---

[16] *Kwaa*—our ancestor.

and over. The men beat alternately, and were accompanied by the 533
people seated on the ground in front of them chanting together. 643
" *Kwaa*, you are great, *Kwaa*, you are great."

A few minutes later young men brought out bundles of sticks and ropes called *angero*, which had been brought from the Fanyikang district near Tonga.

At 9.15 a messenger appeared from Fashoda and the tempo of
the drums was increased. Soon everyone in the village (including
the women who had been keeping close to their houses) was seated
in front of the houses. As the beat increased the people began to chant
together " *Kwaa dibong, Kwaa dibong* ", and to lean forwards and
backwards. One man asked me why I did not place my hands 643
on the ground and say " *Kwaa dibong* ", and when I asked him if one
should worship with the lips or with the heart, he quickly got the point,
and said it was bad to worship only with the lips, for Nyikang would
know. Then four men appeared with baskets on their heads over
which were spread small mats. On inquiry I was told that no one
knew just what was in the baskets, but on later inquiry I discovered [778]
they were the " things of Nyikang " such as his shoes, cloth, beads,
food, and the like. At this point an old woman appeared from the house,
and I was told she had been preparing Nyikang for the journey, and [793]
she was called *nyakwer* (Note 13) or *nyibang Nyikang* (slave of Nyikang).
It seems she is something of a priestess in that she takes care of Nyikang
at the village of Akurwa and resides in the temple of Nyikang. She
now led the people in song, a few words of which I was able to get, and [533
which were as follows :—" Open your mouth, Great One, and speak 539]
to us. Tell us what you are going to bring to us. Promise us the
things we beg of you." This was repeated over and over with the
old woman leading and the others following antiphonally.

The point behind the song is that these people of Akurwa are 643
guardians of Nyikang, and they will not stir out of their village unless 782
the new king promises them great riches. The new king had promised

643 782 so many cows, sheep, spears, etc., and now the people were thrusting themselves upon Nyikang to make sure these things would be delivered to them. They were begging Nyikang to speak to them and assure them that the things would be forthcoming. In all the ceremonies I witnessed the element of begging was paramount, the people begging Nyikang to speak to them and promise them "things of the [781] earth" to enrich them. The element of worship and adoration was singularly lacking. (Note 14).

643 778 After this song everyone turned their backs to the opening of the *kal* (enclosure), and the drums started to beat again. This time the people were silent, and soon Dak appeared and came out of the enclosure. Dak was about twelve feet high, carried on a long bamboo pole. The body of the figure was about eighteen inches long and approximately five inches thick, of a cylindrical shape wrapped about with blue and white checked cloth. It was crowned with a splendid plume of ten to dozen ostrich feathers, all black. Dak was carried by a middle aged man, and I was told that he would receive 'great riches' for his work, probably three or four cows. Dak circled the house three times and then came to rest again at the entrance. At [782] this time two sheep were sacrificed, one at the door of the *kal* and the other beside the road in the direction of Fashoda. These sheep were allowed to lie where their throats had been cut, but I noticed later that, as soon as the procession had passed, the women of the village went out and dragged them in to be eaten.

As Dak stood at the entrance, the drums changed their beat and everyone began to chant "*Kwaa*, you are great". Then Nyikang appeared out of the house and took his place beside Dak. He was carried by a man of middle age. Nyikang was much larger in body than Dak, though not nearly so tall. I estimated the body of the figure as being about five feet long and a foot thick. It was wrapped in the same cloth as Dak and crowned with a much more profuse plume of ostrich feathers. Two long streamers fell away from the head and

were as long as the body. Dak could rest on the ground[17] on the 643
end of the bamboo pole, but Nyikang was never taken off the shoulder 778
of the man carrying him.

As the procession started another sheep was sacrificed and the 643
blood sprinkled on the ground in front of the marching men. Dak [782]
and Nyikang led side by side, with the two drummers taking their [533]
positions on each side and constantly beating the drums. The men
with the six baskets came next, and then the men with bundles of
sticks and ropes. Finally all the followers fell in behind.

The village was circled three times at a half trot, all keeping time [481]
with the drums, and then they started for Fashoda at 9.30 a.m.
Relatively few people were in the procession as they started, but
hundreds began to gather in from all sides until there were approximately six hundred followers when they reached the *kal wi jang* (place
of calling together). Two hours were required for the procession to go [533
two miles, for there was much dancing and singing, moving forward 539]
and again backwards, along the whole way. As the people danced
along in rhythm to the drumbeat they also sang "open your mouth,
Great One, and bring us your promises" or "open your mouth and
answer our beggings." From time to time Dak would run out ahead [778]
as if to survey the road, and then come back to his place beside Nyikang.
If the people crowded too close, Dak would run after them, and everyone would scatter as if the devil were after them.

On reaching a spot within half a mile of Fashoda the procession stopped and waited until messengers had gone to meet the king's party coming from Debalo. They brought back with them some cattle tethering ropes as tokens of the cows and bulls to be paid. One or two of these were refused by the elders who were gathered under a tree, and the messengers had to go back again. Finally all was arranged, and with much shouting and drum beating, the procession started for Fashoda to meet and fight with the followers of the approaching king.

---

[17] We think that Dak never rested directly on the ground but on the bearer.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE INSTALLATION.

643
541

3.—The battle between the two armies outside Fashoda.

[718]

4.—After the battle the reth is seized by Nyikang and led off to Fashoda. The reth is concealed by Nyikang.

[FACING P60]

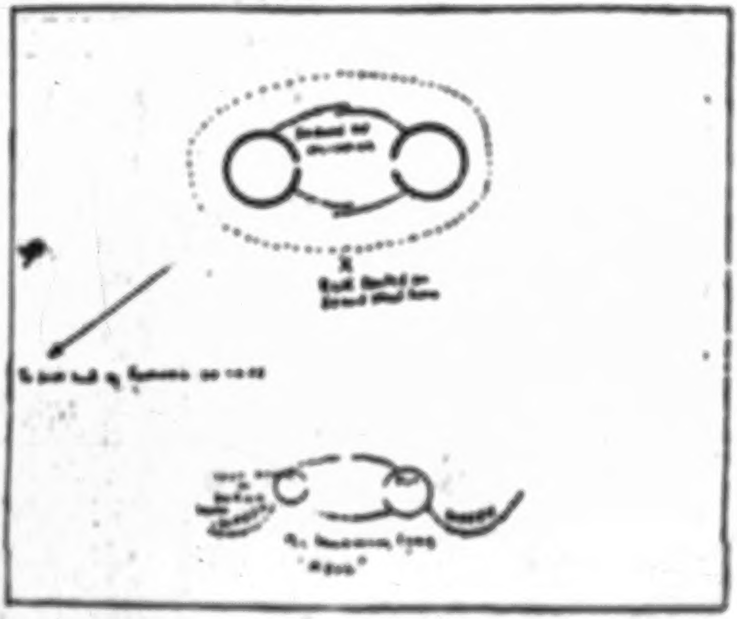
●643 Just as the king's party was sighted, four men came out of Fashoda carrying the sacred shield and spear of Nyikang. As Nyikang and
[778] Dak approached this group there was something of a scuffle, as if the shield and spear were loath to join the procession. But after a short sham battle and much waving of spear and shield, they were persuaded to march with Nyikang, and the procession again moved on to meet the king and his followers at Khor Arepejur in front of Fashoda. This
643 is the traditional battle ground, on which the forces of the king and
941 those of Nyikang join in a great sham battle, both sides using corn stalks instead of spears, and fighting until the followers of Nyikang overcome the guardians of the king and capture the king to carry him away into Fashoda.

The two armies were now drawn up facing one another, the host of Nyikang awaiting to join battle with the *reth* and holding the high ground to the west of the capital.

THE BATTLE

(P.P.H.)

As soon as the *reth* had crossed the watercourse, he and his army advanced at a fast pace in the direction of the host of Nyikang, who had remained on the high ground opposite Fashoda. When the distance between the two parties was no more than two hundred yards the shield-bearer of the king moved forward, and began to dance in a threatening manner, dodging and retreating and advancing in the direction of Nyikang. Small parties of warriors broke away brandishing their millet stalks in the air. The warlike attitude of the opposing armies became apparent. The Kwa Nyikwom who were leading the army of Nyikang began to move, and a few of them broke away in front, brandishing their whips and ropes. Women in the background cried out in exaltation and encouragement, and with wild shouts and holloas the armies fell upon each other. The air was filled with flying millet stalks, and such was the confusion that it is difficult to record accurately what happened, but the *reth's* army was considered to be repelled,



THE [illegible] OF THE [illegible]

[FACING p. 61]

and the *reth* himself captured by Nyikang. Shortly after the first 643
onslaught he was seen in the midst of a crowd of Kwa Nyikwom, cut 541
off from his own followers, and as the procession moved on towards
Fashoda he took up, or was forced to take up, his position under the
shadow of Nyikang, clasping the effigy with both arms and the black
ostrich feathers screening his face.

The eldest son of Fafiti then remarked with relief *"rony arum,"* "the installation is assured", meaning that the great crisis was passed.

The Reth carried off to the Shrine by Nyikang.

The party with Nyikang and the *reth* in their midst then turned 643
towards Fashoda, and walked slowly in the direction of the cleared
space which marks the pool of Cerfuc (Note 15). The drums of Nyikang,
of which there are two sets, and which accompanied Nyikang from
Akurwa, were carried in front and beaten with the rhythm characteristic of the march of Nyikang. The procession drew up to the cleared
space called Cerfuc and halted. In the middle were a group of people 614
clustered together. They were the Kwa Okelo, who were engaged in
wrapping the brown heifer from head to tail in white cloth (Note 16). When
this had been done, they remained in the centre of the square while
Nyikang, with the *reth* immediately behind him and apparently entangled in the cloth wrappings which hang down from the head of the
effigy, processed three times round them. With much singing and 778
drumming the party then faced the shrine of Nyikang, while the Kwa
Okelo speared the heifer, and tore off the white wrappings, which
immediately were seized and carried away by the crowds as sacred
relics.

The Enthronement and Substitution

After the spearing of the heifer, the *reth*, still closely led by Nyikang, 643
advanced towards the shrine. Meanwhile the canopy of white cloth, 778
which is held up to screen the sacred stool (Note 17) of the Shilluk from

643 [178] the public gaze, and the ox-hides upon which it is placed, had already been brought out and set up at the entrance of the shrine, and the stool itself, heavily swathed in white cloth, was hurriedly carried out. Behind stood a Shilluk holding the fish-spear of Dak, which was also wrapped in white cloth. The party escorted by the Kwa Nyikwom with Dak well to the fore then moved up to the canopy, and the effigy of Nyikang was set upon the stool, while the *reth* knelt down and clasped the legs on the north side. The chief of Kwa Nyikwom knelt down and clasped the legs on the other side, and *nyakwer* seated herself to one side of the *reth*. After a long period of much chanting but no visible movement, the effigy of Nyikang was lifted from the stool and hurried into the shrine immediately followed by Dak, and the new *reth* took his place upon the sacred stool of the Shilluk, facing the crowd, but still well screened by the canopy. The place of the *reth* holding the stool for Nyikang was now taken by the *jal tyel kwom reth* (chamberlain). It was not possible to follow all the ceremonial which followed. The party was screened on three sides by the canopy, and the *reth* himself was surrounded by functionaries. The *reth* himself, seated on the stool but screened by the canopy, was facing the crowd, and the chamberlain and another Shilluk knelt on either side to hold the legs of the stool, while *nyakwer* was sitting on the ground to his left. In front was held the sacred spear of Nyikang, which had accompanied the *reth* from Debalo. The majority of the crowd had already dispersed and either took no further interest in the procedure or were not allowed to do so, and those who were watching close at hand were for the most part Kwareth, Ororo, or the attendants of Nyikang. Nevertheless this was the crisis of the ceremonies. The act of substitution upon the stool symbolizes to the Shilluk the possession of the *reth* by the spirit of Nyikang, [775] and we saw that the *reth* was seized with a trembling fit at the critical moment, and certainly he appeared to be in a dazed condition immediately afterwards, when he walked across to the temporary camp opposite the shrine.

After sitting on the stool for about twenty minutes, facing the people, still screened by the canopy, the *reth* arose and escorted by the chief of the Kwa Nyikwom, who held his right hand, and by *nyakwer*, who held his left, walked across the open space in front of the shrine. 643 Here another ox, this time a black and white one, also swathed in white cloth and covered over the back with a leopard-skin decorated at the edges with cowrie shells, was tethered. Beside it stood two men of Kwa Ojul, one holding a crude straight-bladed sword, the other holding a spear. These were said to be yet further weapons of Nyikang, [778 and each in turn was handed to the *reth*, who stood at the tail end of 782] the ox, and with each he made three passes in the air over the back of the ox, which was then led off to be sacrificed.

THE TEMPORARY CAMP

After this ceremony, the *reth*, still accompanied by the chief of Kwa Nyikwom and by the small girl *nyakwer*, entered the screen, which surrounded the temporary huts, and he himself entered the larger of them. These huts were built under the personal supervision [631] of Jago Yor Leiker and Jago Tabo, the chiefs of the south and north. The huts were built of grass, and similar to those built in Shilluk cattle camps. The larger was considered the *reth*'s temporary residence, the smaller the kitchen, where his food should be prepared and where the water was heated for the ritual bathing. The bull mentioned above was stripped of its coverings, which were again torn to pieces [782] by the crowd, and the leopard skin was taken into the shrine of Nyikang. The bull was speared and fell to the ground immediately in front of the *reth*'s temporary camp. After this the public part of the first day's ceremonies was over. The *reth* had retired into seclusion, and those Shilluk who had remained to watch the ceremony of the stool soon dispersed and went off to rest in the shade around Fashoda. Only the Ororo, Kwareth and Kwa Nyikwom, the immediate attendants of the *reth*, remained to guard him and minister to his wants.

The effigies of Nyikang and Dak had already been carried into the shrine. The drums were also put away, and the sacred stool, which had been carelessly left with the canopy draped over it, was carried off, the canopy held around it so that no one could see it go, 643 to the mound of Fashoda, which is called Aturwic, and with it the shield and spears of Nyikang.

The *reth* was now in seclusion. No one but his most personal attendants might visit him. We were told that he would be stripped, bathed, and clothed in new robes during that afternoon. It was neither seemly nor possible to enquire too deeply into this part of the investiture, for it is conducted in strict secrecy. There is evidence that this ritual bathing takes place within the temporary camp Adul, because the smaller of the two huts is known as the "bathing room." Shilluk say that the *reth* is bathed alternately with hot and cold water, so that he shall not be subjected to extremes of temperature. It is a symbolic rite emphasising his people's desire that he shall rule them with even temper throughout his reign. The fact is mentioned by
[119] Munro in his account of Fafiti's installation (Note 18), and informants confirmed the tradition at the installation of *reth* Anei.

During the heat of the day the main crowds dispersed to their homes, but there were still large numbers of Shilluk sitting in and around Fashoda that evening. Most of these were relatives and friends of the inhabitants of the capital, who provided them with
[273] refreshment, since the ban on drinking beer was lifted after the *reth's* retirement. The Ororo and attendants of the *reth* were putting up wind-screens round the *reth's* camp, under which they would sleep
[669] that night to guard him from possible attack. The danger to the *reth's* life was not yet over, a fact which repeatedly appeared from the care and attention of his guardians. The Shilluk describe this period of the ceremonies as "the *reth's* camp *outside* Fashoda", and it was evident that he had not, in the eyes of the Shilluk, entered his capital. His final acceptance by Nyikang and by the Shilluk people still remained in doubt, though one of the most dangerous periods of his initiation from election to final installation had been successfully passed.

The same evening outside the shrine of Nyikang some of the

INSTALLATION OF A RETH

65

The same evening[1] outside the shrine of Nyikang some of the
Kwa Nyikwom were gathered and busily engaged in the spiritual 643
decontamination of persons who had obstructed the passage of 783
Nyikang on his march to Fashoda. These persons had incurred
the displeasure of Nyikang, and were in grave danger of their lives,
unless steps were taken by the Kwa Nyikwom to remove the curse
by rites of purification. The two parties concerned were seated
about two yards apart. Each had a potsherd filled with smouldering
grass in front of him. The attendant member of the Kwa Nyikwom [372]
cut off about half an inch of the hippo whip he carried and burnt it
in the embers. His victim then blew upon the embers, which burst
into flame, but were extinguished with water. The ashes were removed
and the victim anointed with them on the back, chest, palms and soles.
For this privilege each handed over a chicken and a spear as a fine [638]
for a breach of traditional observance in hindering the path of Nyikang.

THE MAKING OF NEW FIRE AT FASHODA.

Just before dusk a group of Ororo and Kwareth began to gather 643
near one of the wind-screens at the side of the temporary camp. All
fires in Fashoda had been extinguished. A wooden club of no special
origin or sanctity was brought and the shaft of a spear detached from
the blade. A small hole was pierced in the handle of the club, and
the spearshaft sharpened to fit this hole. The ritual kindling of 372
fire which followed was no different from the normal method of fire- 643
making with sticks, except that several persons co-operated in twirling
the shaft. One man held the club firmly to the ground, while each
man twirled the shaft in turn, the hands of the second starting at
the top of the shaft, as soon as the first man's hands had reached
the middle. A continuous twirling motion was thus maintained.
The tinder in the hole soon began to smoulder and grass was added 643
and in a short time burst into flames. The fact that no difficulty [787]
had been encountered and that the fire had been kindled quickly was
regarded as a good omen. Men and women who had been sitting [372]
nearby came up to light their pipes from the fire, and embers were
carried off in all directions to relight the fires of Fashoda. The making

[1] [i.e., the day of the enthronement of the Reth. - Analyst]

643 of fire ceremonially at Debalo has already been mentioned. This ceremony completed the first day. Nothing further occurred, though members of the Kwar Nyikwom danced and sang during the night, and sporadic drumming could be heard until the early hours of the morning.

INTERVAL.

During the two days after the *reth's* formal installation on the sacred stool no public ceremonies occurred. The *reth*, still in strict seclusion, moved only at night, and the rites enacted were conducted in secrecy. To the bulk of the people his whereabouts remained unknown. It appears that he spent one night in Adal (11th—12th March) and that the ceremony of tying on the sacred bead of Acoro took place on the morning of the 12th March. It was not possible
[124] to witness any of these rites, and inquiries were met with evasion. An air of reticence and mystery veiled the scene. On the evening of the 12th and after dark, the *reth* went up into the mound Aturwic, and it is said he was enticed away by a woman of the Ororo (*nyororo*), leaving behind him *nyakwer*, the girl of Kwa Okel who had accompanied him from Debalo. During the night of 13th-14th the *reth* visited Dhidu, a house which is below the mound of Aturwic and nearest of all houses to it. This visit must also remain a mystery. Answers
[125] were evasive and probably deliberately misleading, though some informants said it was the house occupied by the Ororo girl.

THE FOURTH DAY.

643
644
The ceremonies of the fourth day centre round the person of *nyakwer* and emphasise the continued opposition between Nyikang and the *reth*-elect. *Nyakwer*, "the girl of the ceremonies", who is provided for the occasion by the Kwa Okel, and who accompanied the *reth* from Debalo, had entered the temporary camp Adal with the *reth*. Thus far her status and the part she plays in the ceremonies had remained obscure. It was not clear whether she could be regarded

643
541

THE FOURTH DAY OF THE INSTALLATION.

The army of Nyikang led by the Kwa Nyikwom and brandishing whips and ropes charges through Fashoda towards the rath.

[Facing p. 67]

as the wife of the *reth* or not. The answer depended on the cattle which had been handed over to the Kwa Okel by the *reth*, and whether they are considered bride-wealth or merely a reward for her services, in the same way as the sheep and cattle given to other expert functionaries who assist. The Shilluk say that the girl does not remain the wife of the *reth* and is handed to some favoured subject after the ceremonies are over. Up to this period in the ceremonies it was therefore problematical to us whether she is regarded as wife at all. The world *kwer* means literally "ceremony or ritual", and the girl is sometimes called *nyareicy*, *reicy* being the term used for the induction ceremonies. This gives no clue to her status, but points to the ritual nature of her functions. The ceremonial acting of the fourth day, however, makes it quite clear that the cattle are indeed bride-wealth, and that she is regarded as the *reth's* wife, at any rate for the duration of the ceremonies.

According to tradition, *nyshwer*, remains with the *reth* in seclusion in the temporary camp outside Fashoda until the second night, after he is enticed away by a girl of the Ororo, who induces him to follow her up into the mound called Aturwic. *Nyshwer*, neglected and forgotten, is left in the temporary camp, until Nyikang steals out from his shrine and carries her off with him. Only on the morning of the fourth day does the *reth* notice her absence and call for an explanation. The chief of the Kwa Okel, "the father of the girl", is summoned by the chief of Gol Dhiang, and is questioned by the *reth*. He denies all knowledge of her whereabouts. "Why do you not know?" demands the *reth*, "Have I not married her with cattle which are now in your possession? Go, bring her back to me." The chief of Kwa Okel goes off in search of her, but returns shortly afterwards to say that he has heard that Nyikang has seized her. He is ordered by the *reth* to fetch her, and goes off to request her return from Nyikang, using the *jago* of the Kwa Nyikwom as an intermediary." "Whose cattle are these?" says Nyikang, "Are they the *reth's* or are they mine?" (Note 19). The *jago* of Kwa Okel returns to the *reth*

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

346
643
778

THE FOURTH DAY OF THE INSTALLATION.
Nyikang and Dak go up into the second Aturwic to make peace with the reth.

293
643

THE FIFTH DAY : [illegible] DAY.
The reth comes down from Aturwic.
He is second from the left and dressed in a Mrs. Gray antelope skin, and behind him is the fan made from the wings of a Saddle-bill Stork.

[FACING p. 68]

643 with news of Nyikang's refusal, but is again sent to fetch her, this
644 time accompanied by the chief of the Gol Nyikang. On their repeating
the *reth's* demand Nyikang falls into a fury of rage and cries out that
he will punish this presumptuous young upstart, who lays such outrageous demands on his property. Immediately he calls for his
drummers, who beat out a tattoo summoning his warriors to war.
The two envoys of the *reth* return to warn him of Nyikang's anger, and
once more the two armies prepare for battle.

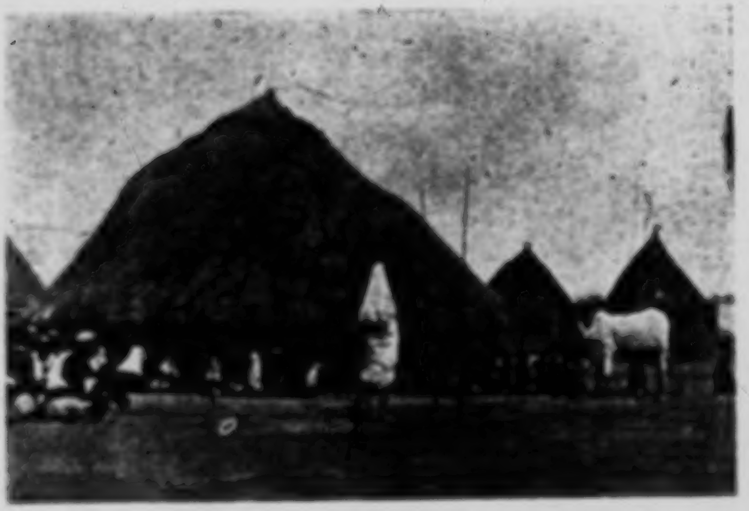
This is the traditional explanation of the cause of the second
613 battle, and the tradition was faithfully enacted. Early that morning
541 Jago Ajang of the Kwa Okel was summoned to Aturwic and was seen
later searching for *nyaluer*. After talking with the Kwa Nyikwom
outside the shrine he went back to Aturwic and returned accompanied
by Jago Yor Leiker, the chief of Gol Nyikang. Together they
entered the shrine, but hurried out almost immediately, and the
drums of Nyikang began to beat. The Kwa Nyikwom and other
followers of Nyikang, both male and female, clustered round the shrine,
and the drummers continued to beat the drums either seated inside
the withy fence, which surrounds the shrine, or walking round the
whole building. An ox-hide was laid in the open space between the
shrines and the temporary huts, and the drums placed thereon.
[533 Nyikang's followers began to dance and sing, the words of the song
535] indicating that Nyikang was angered, and that the *reth* should appease
him. The dance continued for some time, the dancers working themselves into a frenzy of excitement, leaping high into the air with arms
stretched above them. Suddenly Nyikang and Dak appeared at
the entrance of the shrine, and the army began to collect round them.
Led by Dak they encircled the shrine three times, and then marched
off to the hut known as *gol cagor*, where the ropes of Dak and the
whips are kept. The Kwa Nyikwom armed themselves with these
and moved forward towards the mound, with Dak and Nyikang at
[78] their head. At this point another effigy appeared, a smaller one
with grey (female) ostrich-feathers for the head and a slim body of
twined rope. This was Cal another son of Nyikang. (Note [illegible]).

Meanwhile the army of the *reth* was gathering below Aturwic, 643
and the *reth*, dressed in white with a Mrs. Gray skin draped round 541
him and five ivory bracelets on each arm, descended among them. Armed with millet stalks, they began to move slowly forwards in a threatening manner towards the army of Nyikang. When only a hundred yards separated them, a violent argument broke out about the bull, which should have been provided for the occasion to be tied down and walked over by the combatants (Note 21). Both parties retired and the *reth* went up on to the mound again, where he could be seen standing at the central entrance, a long millet stalk in his hand. Nyikang, Dak, and Cal retreated to a point just outside the shrine. After a long delay the bull was brought and placed between the two armies, who advanced, and the *reth* in front of his army walked forward to throw the first spear (millet stalk), which fell at the feet of Dak. Millet stalks began to fly, and in the general mêlée, the *reth* rushed forward with a small escort and wrested *nyakwer* from Nyikang, and hustled her away through the ranks of his warriors up to the mound behind them. Three furious counter-attacks followed by the Kwa Nyikwom, who dashed forward waving and whirling their ropes and whips. Finally, with Nyikang and Dak and Cal, at their head, they reached the bottom of the mound and went up to the huts on top. Shortly afterwards Nyikang and Dak descended from the mound. It was said that all hostility between Nyikang and the *reth* was now
at an end, and that Nyikang had accepted him as his successor. Then 643
they started on a tour of all the huts in Fashoda. This was considered
an inspection of the houses, and those sections of Shilluk who are [688
traditionally called upon to repair them were fined by Nyikang if 358]
they had not done so. The fines were one head of cattle each, and one chief was fined for initiating a song, the privilege of the Kwa Nyikwom. This part of the ceremonies was taken lightheartedly, and the victims subjected to much witticism.

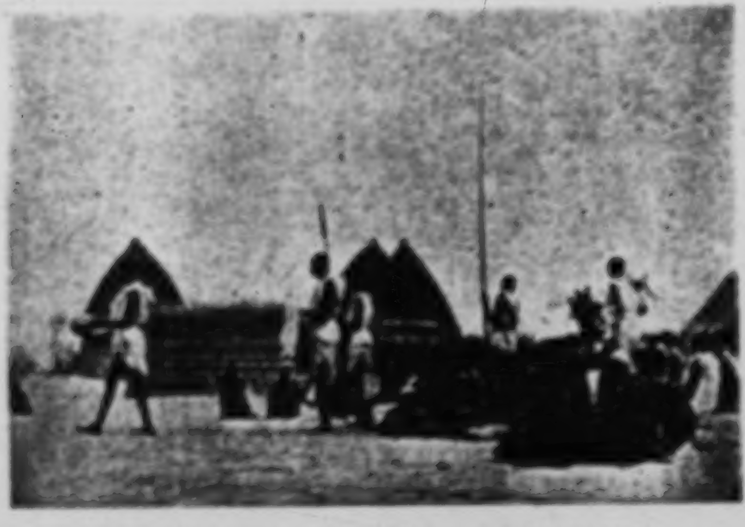
Nyikang, Dak and Cal then retired to the shrine. They took no further part in the ceremonies and did not appear in public until

SPEECH DAY.

342
● 643
411
291
631
644



1.—Each chief, after making his speech, sticks a spear into the ground before the reth as a sign of homage.



2.—The reth's party below Aturwic, with the spears and shield of Nyikang. The drummer in front is beating a tattoo as a sign of appreciation of the speech just delivered.

[FACING p.70]

643 their return journey to Akurwa some weeks later. The *reth* himself remained up on the mound, while the crowds dispersed to their homes or sat about drinking and chatting round the houses of Fashoda.

(W.P.G.T.)

The final ceremonies on 15th. March consisted of a general assembly of all important chiefs and elders from all over the Shilluk country. Speeches were made, mostly of exhortation. The *reth* was confirmed [693] as supreme judge of the Shilluk people; and finally he was ceremonially shown round Fashoda by the chief of the Kwa Nyikang stopping at each house in turn.

The scene was laid in the open space south of Aturwic, and all [202] the chiefs had been summoned by drum in the early morning. At [778] the bottom of the mound we noticed the *kwom* (sacred stool), draped in white cloth as before; two spears, one wrapped in cloth, were held by bearers, one on each side of the *kwom*, and a small kettle-drum shaped like a basin, the property of the Kwa Wung who live mostly round Detwok, was set on the ground close by with its drummer. The lancebearers and the drummer were all from Kwa Wung.

Facing this stage were the assembled chiefs and elders of the Shilluk, with no conspicuous absentees, each one sitting down holding a spear. There was a clear space of some ten yards between the *kwom* and the chiefs.

In front of the entrance to the huts on Aturwic there was a sheep held tethered. Shortly the *reth* emerged from the huts followed by a group of women, wives and sisters: he and his important entourage were dressed in white with Mrs. Gray skins over the garments.

After stepping over the tethered sheep, the *reth* was led down [614] the slope by the chief of the Kwa Nyikang. His retainers followed him, and most of them stepped over the sheep too; when he reached [283] the bottom of the slope he was lifted on to the sacred stool, and sat facing the chiefs with his retainers grouped behind him: immediately

behind him was a bearer carrying a fan made from both wings of the 643
Saddle-billed stork joined in the middle like the letter W. He [293]
was wearing a silver bracelet on each wrist, and came down from the
mound carrying two spears, each head downwards. After being
seated on the stool, these spears were taken back by the chief of the
Kwa Nyikang to Aturwic. A big white bull was then brought by the
Ororo and tied to a stake north of the assembly.

Then the chiefs came forward one by one carrying a spear, head 537
downwards: sometimes two got up together and a short argument 631
arose, but the question was quickly settled by precedence. Some 643
forty or fifty chiefs and elders each had their say in turn, and after 644
each speech the spokesman thrust his spear into the ground: if his
speech met with approval (not we think the approval of the *reth* but
of the drummer) he was given a tattoo on the drum, and escorted part
of the way back to his place by the drummer drumming. The distance
he was escorted depended on the merit of his speech. One chief, of
Dur Nyiliec, came with no spear, and instead he laid a small object,
probably a bead, reverently on the ground.

Most of the speeches, each of which lasted between two and five minutes, were rather trite; the following is a resumé of the more common or interesting points:-

"Anei has been elected *reth* without dissentient voice; all the Shilluk from Mwomo up to Tonga want him as their *reth*."

"All classes of Shilluk society, *kwa reth*, *bang reth*, and *colo* recognise you, Anei, as *reth*, for there was no fight on your appointment."

"The *reth* is alone and has no favourites."

"Assist your chiefs and help them to keep order."

A somewhat discordant note was struck by the chief of Tonga: "our job is not to keep order; that is your job. Our duty is to supply you with choice morsels of hippo meat."

537 An untraditional but common topic was: "The Government
631 needs no introduction, you and it must co-operate; it is not like the
643 Dervishes or Turkia; you must help to collect its taxes."

644 The speeches opened with Jago Yor Leiker, the chief of Gol Nyikang, and Jago Tabo, the chief of Gol Dhiang, and finished with the chiefs of the marches Jago Ongwany of Mwomo and Jago Ding of Tonga. Each chief stuck the spear into the ground before the *reth* when his speech was ended, so that there remained a veritable forest of spears in front of the *reth* after the speech-making was over.

After Jago Ding's speech there was a short silence, after which the company started a chant to Nyikang and the *reth*. Then the *reth* got up and addressed his people, for now for the first time he was truly installed on the stool of Nyikang, and was fully become *reth*. "I have become your *reth*", he said, "and I will rule you and justify those who are aggrieved."

643 The assembly then arose, and the *reth* moved over to where the
782 white bull was tied. He made passes over its back with a spear, and
retired. The Ororo came up, and after an abortive attempt which bent the spear, they stabbed the bull. The spears stuck in the ground were taken, some by Jago Yor Leiker, some by the men of Akwobai, who had gone to Kosti; and some by Kwa Wang.

After this came the final ceremony. The *reth*, accompanied
643 by a few chosen followers, was introduced to each house in Fashoda
644 by the chief of Kwa Nyikang. There are many sites in the south east
side of Fashoda where there used, in the days of *reth* Fadiet, to be houses, but Fashoda is smaller now. Tradition is strong however, and the *reth* was solemnly introduced to those sites, and told their names, and whose responsibility it was to rebuild them. When he came to the favourite house of his father *reth* Kur, a sheep was brought and prostrated before the door. The *reth* stepped over it and passed into the house, and the installation ceremonies were ended.

PART IV.—SEQUEL.

Fertility Rites and Rain-Making.

(i) After his installation the *reth* took a day or two to recover, 643
and we are told that about a week later, a hornless cow, the colour 789
of a hippopotamus was sacrificed by the *reth* on the river bank. This 782
was done to make the hippopotamus increase, and prosper the Shilluk hunters.

(ii) There was a slight hitch over the rain-making ceremony, 643
which we are informed by Mr. L. W. A. Raven, takes place in the early 789
rains each year. The *reth* is said to slaughter a bull the colour of the rain clouds. We asked the *reth* about this, and he said "Oh, it has been done at Fanyikang already by the chief of Kwa Nyikang." Resulting from this departure from custom, after only light showers, one on the last day of the installation, the rains were late, and by the
end of June the *reth* was worried. The sequel is interesting. An 787
old woman of Lemmo section dreamed of the departed *reth*. This 766
showed that his spirit had not been laid to rest properly, and had not the Funeral Dance been cut short by two days? So another and smaller funeral dance of two days duration was held on the 2nd. and 3rd. July, at the same village of Paroth Fafiti. A few days later it started to pour with rain, and continued, so that it was for the Shilluk a year of plenty.

POSTSCRIPT

(W.P.G.T.)

On 6th, April I visited Fashoda on business. Three days 643
previously the *reth* had told me in a matter of fact way that he was going to finish off the party from Akurwa, and give them their dues, and then "they could do as they pleased, but he, the *reth*, was finished with them." Their dues were 20 head of cattle. By the 6th. I fancied this would all be over, however as I approached I met about six men carrying hides and about ten women carrying household utensils

643 on their heads. I recognised them as Kwa Nyikwom going back to
Akurwa. Their return had been hastened by the early rain.

Fashoda had the party spirit, particularly the *reth*. He at once
776 led me to the centre of Fashoda and I sat down in the shade of a cattle
643 byre to be inconspicuous, for something was about to happen.
535 Nyikang, Dak and Cal were all packed up and ready to go to Akurwa.
They were in fact all three standing outside Aturwic. Everyone
was dancing and singing.

The *reth* went up the mound and spoke to the people carrying Nyikang. Suddenly Dak and Cal followed by Nyikang came down from the mound and made a bee-line for me.

They rushed to where I was sitting and started dancing at me two paces away. The *reth* was dancing with them. They continued dancing till I gave them the token small piece of grass, which represented a bull, which I would give them at Kodok. They then went on, and did the same to any of the chiefs they found at Fashoda. The chief of Lul knew the honour would cost him a bull, and so he stayed discreetly in his house.

When Nyikang had thus gathered what he wanted for the journey
home, they all danced round and round for an hour or more with the
reth beside them. Then they became more solemn and as a final
gesture they stood the *reth* under the folds of Nyikang's wrappings
and sang the songs of Nyikang. The casting of the mantle of
[777] Nyikang over the new *reth* was to bring him back luck. Nyikang, Dak,
643 the *reth* and the *reth's jal tyel kwom*, his chamberlain, were in the middle
778 of the small throng. The Ororo woman, who had enticed him away
from *ayakwer* at the time of the installation, and some of the *reth's*
sisters, were sitting around in front. I was about 10 paces away.
[787] A small girl by my side swooned, and was possessed by Nyikang—
[illegible] when she grew up, she would have charge of one of his shrines.

Then at last the party formed up and dashed off at a trot, on their way. The *reth* escorted them about 200 yards, and then came back. "Come and have a bowl of beer," he said "because it is hot."

Such was the atmosphere as Nyikang left for home after his thirtieth installation. 643 778

NOTES

1. **The Great Divisions of the Shilluk Kingdom.** The Shilluk kingdom is divided into two parts in two different ways. An archaic religious division into two "sees" called Gol Nyikang (south) and Gol Dhiang (north) seems only to be important on ceremonial occasions such as the installation of the *reth* or the rebuilding of Fashoda. Each "see" has one ceremonial chief. 631 616

Investigation has shown that these two "sees" are not coterminous with the two great temporal provinces of Gerr and Luak. The traditional boundary between Gerr (northern province) and Luak (southern province) is some 15 miles south of Fashoda between the sections of Both and Fathau. The sections from Both northwards to Yoiny are small sections composed of a succession of small villages, which the Shilluk liken to the beads of an ostrich eggshell necklace and call collectively Wirek (an ostrich eggshell necklace).

In the 19th. century there was opposition between Gerr and Luak over rival candidates for the *reth*ship, when the Turkish Government tried to get Ajang accepted as *reth*, and between Akol and Kur, Gerr supporting Ajang and Kur, and Luak supporting Kwikwon and Akol. 616 631 669 643

When the two great provinces mobilised against each other for civil war, for their organisation is primarily military, the small sections of Wirek were overawed or defeated by the forces of Luak, though they should have mobilised with Gerr, and they turned traitor.

After *reth* Kur returned from Omdurman and defeated the forces of Akol (Luak and Wirek) and exiled Akol, the old boundary was restored, and Wirek returned once more to Gerr.

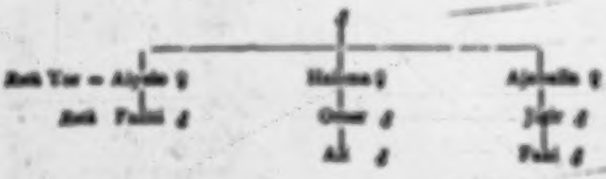
This is one of the few occasions when we diverge from Pumphrey's account of the Shilluk *S.N.R.* Vol. 24, p. 27 ("The Shilluk Tribe"). The distinction between the two sets of divisions becomes clearer when dealing with an occasion such as the installation of the *reth*. [114]

NOTE TO INTRODUCTION

070 1. Sir Samuel Baker. *Ismailia* p. 102.

NOTES TO PART I

644 3. The relationship of the two most important men among the late *reth's* maternal relatives is recorded below :—



Ali and Faki, descendants of Fafiti's mother's sisters, were present.

643 648 The Nuba of the Fungor area have considerable traditional connection with the Shilluk. The bamboos for Nyikang's body are brought from here, and gifts are exchanged between the *reth* and the local Nuba chief, whom we met at Fashoda some time after the installation when he was being invested with the insignia of a Shilluk chief.

643 361 103 4. *Reth* Fafiti was brought up in a village in Kodok section, but after 1917 the supporters of Coti Ajang were too numerous for comfort in Kodok section, and Fafiti, in fear of assassination, moved his village to Golbainy and called it Abogathow "fear of death."

539 766 643 5. The royal Shilluk drums had special houses built for them in Fashoda, and special custodians appointed for them. These drums no longer exist. Shilluk say that *reth* Fafiti, angered because *reth* Fadiet had held no funeral dance for *reth* Kur hurled the royal drums into the Nile, and held the dance for *reth* Fadiet with Fadiet's own drums. For the funeral dance of a *reth* (*woro*) the drums are stood up on end in shallow holes prepared in the ground, and beaten with newly cut sticks of the *heglig* tree. For other funeral dances, the drums are mounted horizontally upon forked sticks.

6. *Costumes.* All the warriors wore "war paint", their faces smeared with red, a mixture of brick dust and oil. Hair wigs and feather crests were worn by most men, including chiefs, who had no elaborate head-dresses of their own hair. Skins were worn as well as cloth. Leopard skins were worn, largely by wives of the late *reth*, and by *new reth* and chiefs, and the skins of the Mrs. Gray antelope and cob by those to whom they had been presented by Fafiti. An interesting feature was the senior wife, who was clad in the deceased's clothes, his special cloak (*lau*), cummerbund, and sash, and the Scottish International Rugby cap which had been presented to Fafiti by Mr. P. Munro. The cap had aged a lot in the last few years, but has established itself as part of the regalia, and the new *reth* requested that a substitute be found for him for the ceremonies. 766 [301 302] [292] [644]

NOTES TO PART 3

7. The *reth* could not start without *nyakwer*. Her status and significance are discussed in the text of the fourth day's ceremonies. It is possible that the lateness of the Kwa Okel was due to a conventional reluctance to produce the girl. 643 644

8. Important personages in the ceremony, and female relatives of the *reth* or attendants of Nyikang wore the skins of female Mrs. Gray antelope. The *reth* himself wore one on the last two days of the ceremony. The chief of Gol Nyikang was observed on the morning of the first day's ceremonies wearing a black skin of the male Mrs. Gray. He soon changed to a female skin. 643 292

9. The *reth* was on a journey, and these were his attendants and his luggage. Nyikang had a similar retinue. 643 644

10. The *reth's* sacred shield is a counterpart to that of Nyikang; like Nyikang's shield it should have been brought from Fashoda, but at the last moment it was forgotten.

11. The Kwa Otwot may originally have been a clan which has now died out. The prefix indicates an agnatic kinship group. They 614

614 are not a clan now, and are messengers chosen *ad hoc*, as far as we could judge. *Twot* is the word used for the *reth's* messengers.

643 12. These messages amounted to a bargaining about how many cows the *reth* should give Nyikang. Whether the intention was to bribe Nyikang to come and instal the *reth*, or to persuade him to stay
[illegible] away because of his "holiness" is not clear. We incline to the latter explanation, but Mr. McClure favours the former.

182
643 13. *Nyakwer*, meaning the girl, or woman, connected with the ceremonies, could be used of any individual female participant.

778 14. Our impression of those ceremonies witnessed by us was that Nyikang was held in manifest awe.

643 15. Cerfuc, and Kal wi Jang. Cerfuc is what the Shilluk say used to be a pool and is now filled up, but was carefully weeded for the occasion. Kal wi Jang, or Ujang, is 200 yards N.E. of Cerfuc.

778 16. All objects of great sanctity were covered in white cloth. The wrapping of cattle in cloth may merely signify their ritual value, and the necessity for screening them from the public gaze, but with all cattle it was evident how careful the Shilluk were to see that the animal was blindfold. After wrapping the animal the cloth itself was greatly prized as a sacred relic, being imbued with the sanctity of the animal.

173
778 17. Tradition says that the original stool was captured by the "Funy" and never returned. The present stool is a substitute. The cloth wrappings made it impossible to see the exact shape, but it had four legs, and appeared to be about twenty inches long and ten inches wide.

18. P. Munro. "The installation of the *reth* of the Chol". *S.N.R.* Vol. I, pp. 145 ff., reprinted as Appendix I in *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* by C. G. and B. Z. Seligman, p. 546.

643
778 19. This remark shows that the property of the *reth* is also property of Nyikang—at least after the installation is completed. Actually the cattle paid to the Kwa Okelo belonged to Fafiti, but

such is the spiritual oneness of Nyikang and all *reths* that their property 643
is ultimately under the authority of Nyikang, and belongs to Nyikang. 778

20. There are two traditions about Cal. We think there must 173
have been two sons of Nyikang called Cal. One is said to have been
the second *reth* of the Shilluk, and the other is said never to have come 778
to Shilluk country, but to have stayed behind in Uganda to become
the ancestor of the Acholi. It was the latter tradition which was
more in evidence in connexion with the effigy of Cal, but the former
explanation might have been more reasonable.

21. It is the tradition that a man should be tied down between 177
the opposing armies to be stepped over by the combatants. In 1903
however, at the time of the installation of *reth* Fadiet, a young man, 643
went to the Governor at Kodok, and petitioned him to forbid the *reth* 648
to tie down his father to be stepped over. The Governor forbade this practice, for the danger of the man being trampled to death was considerable, and ordered that a bull be substituted. A bull was used at the installation of *reth* Fafiti as well, but now the petitioner of 1903 a man of the Kwa Nyidiang, whose duty it was to provide the man for tying down, asked if he might be tied down in place of the bull, for, he said, his defiance of the custom in 1903 had caused his family to sicken and die. Nyikang was consulted about this, but he said "If you wish to carry out the old custom, you must do it completely, and provide me with a girl to take back to Akurwa." The negotiations broke down, as no one would provide the girl, and a bull was substituted. But it was rather halfheartedly drawn across the battleground, and not tied down between the two armies. Seligman (*op. cit.* p. 95) suggested that the man should have been tied down at Khor Arepejur on the first day of the ceremonies. We think that he must have been wrongly informed by the Shilluk, in view of all the circumstances surrounding the hitch in this second mock battle.

APPENDIX I.

DETAILS OF CHIEFS COMPOSING THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE.

631 The following chiefs composed the electoral college in 1943:—

643
666

1. Chief of Debalo Kwom (chief of Gol Nyikang).
2. " " Golbainy " " " Dhiang).
3. " " Mwomo.
4. " " Tonga.
5. " " Delal Ajak.
6. " " Bur Nyilec (Athodwoi division).
7. " " Othecogo (Detwok division).
8. " " Fadit (Wau division).
9. " " Owaliny Obwa (Malakal division).
10. " " Adodo Dettim.
11. " " Fanyikang.
12. " " Acago (Detwok division).
13. " " Fadiang (Golbainy division).
14. " " Yoiny (Fashoda division).

Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 are explained adequately in the text.

[173] Nos. 5, 8, and 11 are the traditional big chiefs, whose ancestors held the *lau dwong* or "high robe of office" from Nyikang. They are still in possession of the *lau dwong*.

Nos. 7 and 10 have only recently been displaced by Government from the *lau dwong* owing to inefficiency. The *lau dwong* will naturally tend to revert to their lineages when a vacancy occurs.

Nos. 6 and 9 are chiefs with an ancient claim to the *lau dwong* which their ancestors possessed in the days of Nyikang. They have sunk into unimportance, because of the shrinkage of their lineage.

Nos. 12, 13 and 14 are the three Kwareth members.

Nos. 13, the chief of Fadiang, is looked upon as the chief of all the Kwareth.

The Electoral College of 1903 consisted of 12, 13 and 14, 1, 2, 7, 8 (only seven names are given). 631 643 [illegible]

The Electoral College of 1917 consisted of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13. There also appeared the chief of Athodwoi, in place of the chief Bur Nyilwc (8), and the chiefs of Nyigir, Abienyal (in Detwok division), and Kodok. The chiefs of Bur Nyilwc, Owaliny Obwa, Fanyikang and Yoiny were not present. The chief of Abienyal may have represented the chief of Yoiny.

It is noteworthy that in 1917 the chiefs of Kwom and Golbainy and the Kwareth chiefs of Fadiang and Acago were all bribed by Coti Ajang, the pretender. This is an indication of who were the most influential chiefs in the college. N.B. The chief of Yoiny was not there to be bribed. [662]

APPENDIX II.

NYIKANG AND DAK, AND THE EQUIPMENT CARRIED WITH THEM.

Nyikang and Dak.

The effigy of Nyikang was made up of a tubular framework of bamboo rods covered with blue check imported cloth. The body at the top appeared to be about 14 inches in diameter tapering to about 9 inches. Wound round the top and tied in a knot like a cravat was a separate piece of cloth hanging down below the base of the body. On the first two days of Nyikang's journey this 'cravat' was of black cloth. When the party reached Golbainy, it was of the same blue check cloth as the body. The head of the effigy consisted of a mop-like plume of black ostrich feathers which hung down over the knot in the cravat. Overall the effigy was about 5 feet long. 643 778

The effigy of Dak was differently constructed. It consisted of a long bamboo pole, about 8 feet in length, with a cylindrical body of the same blue cloth some 2 foot 6 inches long, at the top of the pole. The head was made of a smaller bunch of black ostrich feathers than that of Nyikang.

Personal Equipment.

643 778 The equipment carried by the Kwa Nyikwom for Nyikang and Dak consisted of the following.

[534] 1. *Drums.* There were two pairs of kettledrums; one was embellished with black ostrich feathers and rings around the edges, the other pair was made of plain wood. They were basin-shaped, and beaten with a distinctive rhythm as Nyikang proceeded. The original pair "Obany" and "Cal" are said to have been captured, the former from the Arabs and the latter from the "Funy."

[411] 2. *Spears.* A collection of spears, sometimes three, and sometimes more, was carried. None of the spears carried was wrapped in cloth, as is usual with sacred spears

[415] 3. *Cooking Pots and Baskets.* The pots were of the normal Shilluk types, and the baskets basin-shaped and covered with reed mats. There was generally a pair of each. These contained Nyikang's food for the journey

4. *Nyikang's Bed.* A forked pole about 8 feet long with a circular leather flap hanging from the joint of the fork.

5. *Nyikang's Shield.* This was only produced from Aturwic wrapped in cloth. It did not come from Akurwa. It was apparently similar in shape to a normal Shilluk shield, but very much smaller

6. *Ropes and Grass.* These were not strictly part of Nyikang's equipment, but were carried by the Kwa Nyikwom. The ropes were said to be made at the installation of *reth* Fafiti in 1917, and the grass and fibre which had been brought by Dak from Fanyikang were for the Kwa Nyikwom to make into new ropes for the new installation. These ropes, like the whips carried by the Kwa Nyikwom, were used for warding off the inquisitive

APPENDIX III.

(W.P.G.T.)

LIST OF CLANS PARTICIPATING IN THE INSTALLATION CEREMONIES.

References are made to the list of Shilluk clans in Westermann. *The Shilluk People* pp. 118-134. 614
645

Kwa Mal. The clan which claims the privilege of sowing cowrie shells in the path of the reth on his journey from Debalo to Arepejur. Westermann lists them as 2 and 22, but assigns to them the functions which we believe are performed by Kwa Nyikwom.

Kwa Nyikang. The clan which provides the ceremonial blacksmiths for the royal spears. Westermann lists them as No. 8, but assigns to them a different function. The duties of Westermann's No. 60, Kwa Anut, seem similar (the making of fire by friction).

Kwa Okelo. The clan charged with producing the small girl, *nyadwor*, for the ceremonial marriage. Westermann lists them as No. 14, not No. 13.

Kwa Nyikir. The clan responsible for the management of the funeral dance; called by Westermann Kwa Nyikai and listed as No. 65.

Kwa Nyikwom. The high priests of Nyikang at Akurwa, who carry Nyikang to Fashoda, and tend his shrine. They drive off intruders with whips on the way to Fashoda. Not listed by Westermann, though his No. 5, "Kwa Leh" has similar functions.

Kwa Ojal. The clan which produces the heifer for the journey from Debalo to Fashoda. Not listed by Westermann.

Kwa Wang. The clan responsible for beating the drum which applauds approved speeches on the last day of the installation ceremonies. Westermann lists Kwa Wan as No. 44.

NOTE. We find that this list of clans given by Westermann betrays marks of haste. He assigns one home for most clans. While the clans are generally to be found in the places he mentions, several other lineages of the same clan are frequently found elsewhere [114]

FURTHER NOTES ON THE DEATH OF A RETH OF THE SHILLUK (1945)

By W. P. G. Thomson.

These notes are intended to amplify the article "The Death of a *Reth* of the Shilluk and the Installation of his Successor" by Mr. P. P. Howell and myself published in *Sudan Notes & Records* Vol. XXVII, 1946. [21]

No attempt is made to describe the ceremonies in full. The general pattern followed that of 1944 and these notes are chiefly concerned with the differences observed on this occasion, and the reasons given by the Shilluk for these differences. It was interesting to observe that in several cases where points of ceremonial differed, the procedure reverted to that of January 1918 described by Munro in *Sudan Notes & Records* Vol. I, 1918.

The disposal of the Body and Soul of Reth Anei.

The course of events was as follows:—

Reth Anei Kur died on November 10th 1945. He had been ill for some days, apparently from an attack of relapsing fever, which was prevalent among the Shilluk at the time; he was known to have a bad heart, and had in fact had a heart attack some months previously in Malakal hospital. A Shilluk medical assistant, present at Fashoda at the time of the *reth's* death, reported that he died in his arms of heart failure. This is as good evidence as we are likely to obtain that *reth* Anei died a natural death. 693

I was invited, as in 1943, to pay my last respects to the corpse. This I did on November 11th, and the scene was similar to that of 1943, but simpler. The corpse was fanned by sisters of the *reth*, and his wives were not in the house with the corpse. Several were observed outside. The reed mats were not so elaborate as in 1943 and there were no cloth curtains. 766

The corpse was not immediately buried, as happened in 1943, but was taken on the night of 11.11.45 to a small hamlet belonging to the village of Fadwal, (the village of the Bang Reth Kur — slaves of *reth* Kur, the father of Anei) some three quarters of a mile from Fashoda, and sealed up in a hut. These proceedings were naturally secret, and I was not invited to enquire into details. This method of disposing of the corpse was a reversion to tradition: there is no evidence that a [567]

766 maiden was sealed up alive in the hut along with the corpse, which is also said to be traditional.

Fafiti Yor died in September 1943, and his funeral dance was held in November. Anei Kur died in November 1945, and his funeral dance was not held until October 1946. This longer interval was also more in accord with Shilluk custom, which holds that there should be an 648 interval of about a year between the death of a *reth* and the installation of a successor. The installation ceremonies should follow quickly upon the funeral dance for the deceased, and should take place after the harvest is ripe.

Two days before the dance, the remains of *reth* Anei were brought secretly, and by night, from Fadwol to Golbainy where his private village had been, and were buried in his house. The remains were brought by Oruro under the supervision of Gol Nyidhok, the descendants of Nyidhok, the grand father of Anei. The dance took place there and only occupied two days. It was less well attended, and the contingents not so well marshalled as in 1943, but the essential characteristics were the same, and there were the same arguments about how long it should last. The ceremonies were in the hands of the eldest son of the deceased, and of Kwanyireth Bol Acien, the chief of Lul, who had taken a large part in 1943. The chief of the Kwareth, who was senile in 1943, had died in the meantime, but his successor in office, a young man, took no part. The *reth* remained purposely in Fashoda, and did not come to Golbainy at all. It was noticed that, as bulls were slaughtered, the horns and tails were hung on to the palisade surrounding the house where *reth* Anei lay buried, and his cattle bells and other ornaments were displayed by *bangreth* in front of the tomb, spread out upon a bull skin.

The election of Reth Dak Fadiet.

643 On the death of *reth* Anei the electoral college were summoned,
666 as in 1943, by Jago Tabo of Golbainy for Gol Dhiang and Jago
631 Yorbeker of Kwom for Gol Nyikang, the two great ceremonial divisions of the Shilluk kingdom. The composition of the college was the same as in 1943, except that the chiefs of Bur Nyilec and Owaliny Obwa could not attend owing to illness. It was clearer to me than before that the choice rests entirely with the chiefs of Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang. I doubt whether even the chief of the Kwareth has any influence: he and the other members of the college have only to listen to the decision.

643 *Reth* Anei had not lived long enough to adopt a *nyireth*, as *reth*

Fafiti had done. Opinion was decided that the succession lay with 643
the sons of Fadiet, and as the electors gathered at Fashoda, so the sons
of Fadiet left their homes and came within easy reach. This was a
breach of tradition, which demands that all *nyireth* at such a time
should remain quietly at home. It gave rise to certain fears among
the chiefs that some *nyireth* might try to instal himself in vacant Fashoda
by force. There was no evidence in the event that any *nyireth* had had
such an intention.

The sons of Fadiet were not well known to the chiefs; unlike the 643
sons of Kur, they had a reputation for being quiet and unassertive. 666
There was no obvious choice designated, as Anei had been designated
by Fafiti. The two king-makers reduced the sons of Fadiet to a short
list of four names, and waited for a lead from me, as they could not [648]
decide upon any one of those four. After my suggestion that Dak
Fadiet of Falo, one of their short list, would be a good choice, the chiefs
at once agreed to him. There had been rumours of bribery, as in 1917, 662
and two bribes were known to have been offered to, and refused by, 643
Jago Tabo of Golbainy, the chief of Gol Dhiang. One had been offered 666
by *nyireth* Nyikang Kur, a "princess" of evil repute, who wished her
uterine brother, a son of *reth* Fadiet, to succeed. It appeared from a
discussion with the two kingmakers that bribery on such a solemn occasion [687]
would result in certain death for the recipient at the hands of
Nyikang and was out of the question. This may be so, and would be
a reasonable tribal sanction to ensure an unbiassed choice. There 643
was a suggestion from the southern Shilluk, where most of the sons
of Fadiet live, that the electoral college with its northern bias would 666
choose a *reth* from the north. There was no sign of this, because it 631
was agreed at once that a son of Fadiet must succeed, and no one of
these sons lived north of Fashoda. The feeling in the south that the
north has more influence in Fashoda probably arose because the lines
of *reth* Yor and *reth* Kur both come from the north and only that of
reth Kwathker and his son Fadiet from the south. Fashoda itself is
considered to be in the northern half of the kingdom.

Dak Fadiet was initially installed, and ceremonially washed and 643
shaved by Ororo girls in Fashoda on 18.11.45. He was followed by a
large crowd of some hundreds of armed men from Gol Nyikang and
particularly from his own area of Fanyidwai and all the Colo chiefs
present. His following was much larger than that of Anei in 1943.
The crowd may have been expressing simple gratification that at last a
reth had come from the south; they may have been there to try and
prevent a candidate from the north being installed. But the ceremony

643 was completely peaceful, and the people of the villages surrounding Fashoda were not much in evidence.

The method of summoning the new *reth* was interesting. Dak like other sons of Fadiet was not far away, and the chief of Gol Nyikang sent his son by night to get him. Whether or not there is a mock fight between the selected candidate and the messengers I do not know, but the traditional form of words announcing the choice was told to me. It is an interesting example of Shilluk "understatement" when talking
[195] of the *reth* (c.f. Pumphrey *Sudan Notes & Records* Vol. XXIV, p. 44) — "You are our Dinka slave, we want to kill you" which means "You are our chosen *reth*, we want to instal you in Fashoda."

It was said that the installation of *reth* Anei had been hurried and many things had been forgotten. This was interesting in view of Anei's short tenure of office, which may have been due, in Shilluk eyes, to the omission of essential ceremonies connected with the installation. It was also said, and this was true, that Anei had hurried his installation through fear, in his anxiety to get it over. The new *reth* determined that in his case there should be nothing lacking and that the proper interval of time should be allowed to elapse. That this period is a time of ritual danger, as we suggested in the previous article, was frequently confirmed in 1946. The *reth*
643 became more and more worried as the installation approached. There
669 were rumours of rivals being harboured by important chiefs, and of preparations made for his assassination. They culminated in a strong rumour that a *nyireth* had declared his intention of assassinating the *reth* on the first day of the installation ceremonies. Mr. J. C. N. Donald, who followed the *reth's* party in their march to Fashoda on that day, confirmed the *reth's* nervousness. After the installation ceremonies were safely over, I asked the *reth* about this, suggesting that his apprehensions had been ill-founded, and he admitted, for the crisis was then over, that he had never had concrete evidence of any plot.

643 The actual preparations followed similar lines to those of 1944.
It appeared that it was important that the ceremonies should take
[821] place on a waxing moon, and in the event this delayed the installation for about three weeks. As the time approached, there was the same apprehension that Nyikang would not start from Akurwa.

[614] On 27.12.46 Nyikang and Dak arrived at Adodo Nyigir at sunset, carried by Kwanyikwom, the sacred clan from Akurwa who always have this duty. They entered the village, as they had done in 1944, over the body of a black sheep, and after dancing round the village, they went into the same house. They had come, as before, after

beating the bounds of Shilluk land at Moro, north of Kaka. The details of their progress were similar to that of 1944. 683

The only observed difference between the preliminaries for Nyikang's journey was the embassy to Fanyikang to get *dom* fibre for the ceremonial ropes. This year it was performed by 'Anungo,' one of the uncrowned sons of Nyikang, and not by Dak as in 1944. The embassy this year only went to the *dom* palm forest at Obai Degu, which is 15 miles downstream of Fanyikang.

On 28.12.45 the *reth* was still at Fashoda, and not yet fled to Debalo Kwom. It was expected that he would go before dawn on 29.12.45. Fashoda was full of his personal supporters from the southern Shilluk. I noticed that the *reth* had apparently made friends with the *ojwok* whom he had recently suspected of trying to ambush him.

The *reth* started for Debalo secretly at about 3.00 a.m. on 29.12.45. After resting half way, he entered Debalo, after the village had ceremonially resisted him three times. He stepped over a black sheep, held by Ocoro. When he entered, his supporters all broke into one of the songs of Nyikang. This was a mistake, as the whole proceeding should have been secret. The *reth* stayed at the same broken down house as in 1944, and the same royal house was prepared, and left empty.

Jago Yorbiker, the chief of Gol Nyikang, was in charge of the ceremonies. All the fires had been put out before the *reth's* arrival, and preparations had been made to light new fire by the ceremonial method of *pio mar*. This method is later used at Fashoda and is described in our previous article (op. cit. p. 65). A bull was brought by Jago Yorbiker, which was to be speared when the *reth* came out of seclusion to be greeted by the assembled chiefs of Gol Nyikang in the evening. The chiefs of Gol Dhiang had no business in Debalo, and if they came, they would come as observers. Some sheep were brought by self-confessed adulterers. The *reth* insisted that only adulterers whose cases had not previously been opened could avail themselves of this privilege of amnesty, but in the event a few men tried to avoid a judgment debt by paying a sheep. There is some confusion about the ownership of these sheep. It seems clear that they belong to the *reth*, but are presented by him to the chief of Debalo Kwom (himself the chief of Gol Nyikang) as a recognition for his services in sheltering the *reth* in Debalo. In 1944 the chief of Gol Nyikang appropriated the sheep without permission.

That evening the drums of Nyikang were heard from Nyigir, and the *reth's* drums from Debalo. The procession carrying the sacred beads *Ocoro* from Lul arrived at about 8.00 p.m.

643 The next day December 30th, *Adul*, the temporary camp outside Fashoda, was built by Jago Yorleiker. This time he built both huts, and the chief of Gol Dhiang had no part.

On the 31st the *reth* and Nyikang were ready for the installation ceremonies. Nyikang and his army left Nyigir at about 9.00 a.m. and went straight to the village north of Fashoda, where they had to wait some two hours for the *reth* to start from Debalo. The army of Nyikang moved steadily this time and seldom turned back in countermarch as it had done in 1944. The *reth* was delayed ceremonially till about midday. His form of procession was similar to 1944, and the cattle which were bride-wealth for Nyakwer were observed being driven along beside his army.

There had been an abnormal White Nile flood in 1946, as in 1917 at the time of the installation of *reth Fafiti*, and the Khor Arepejur, which was dry in March 1944, was now an expanse of water about 80 yards wide. When the *reth* arrived at the khor, the *Golbainy* dragged the small black bull to the southern bank. The *reth*, taking Nyakwer by the hand, stepped over the bull and into a canoe. He was paddled across the khor with Nyakwer sitting behind him, while his followers forded the stream.

As the two parties of Nyikang and the *reth* approached each other Nyikang dashed forward and captured the *reth* without a struggle and began at once to carry him off to Cerfac (op. cit. p.p. 61 & 78) Fashoda. This corresponded with Munro's observation in 1918 (*Sudan*
114 *Notes & Records* Vol. I), but not with what we had seen in 1944, when
645 there had been a spectacular mock battle with millet stalks. I was
664 told that they had "made a mistake" in 1944, and also that owing to the hardness of the millet stalks they were afraid of injuring someone.
541 This latter reason had not cancelled the fight in 1944. There is another possible reason: the *reth* himself was feeling in a state of acute personal danger, owing, as he thought, to the likelihood of someone making an attack on his life. He may have issued orders at the last moment that the battle was not to take place, in case someone should take advantage of the confusion to attack him. This seems more possible because the *reth's* army were all carrying millet stalks as they crossed the khor, as if in preparation for the mock battle.

643 The rest of the ceremonies closely followed precedent. *Reth* Dak, while enthroned on the stool was "possessed" by Nyikang, in the
[776] same way as *reth* Anei had been. He was afterwards led away to seclusion in *Adul* leading Nyakwer by the hand. An incident which
[783] may be of interest occurred while the *reth* was being led to *Adul*. The

sheep over which he had to step on entering *Adul*, defaecated on the 6V3
way. The man holding the sheep picked up the droppings and rubbed 783
them on the sheep's back. After he had done so he made gestures showing that he had restored the situation, indicating that the sheep was no longer defiled.

For the following account of the final ceremonies I am indebted 6V3
to Mr. H. A. Nicholson, then Deputy Governor Upper Nile, with whom I witnessed them.

The final ceremonies of the installation of the new *reth* of the Shilluk took place at Fashoda on 3rd and 4th January. This time there were no large crowds, but only the chiefs and leading notables and the attendants of Nyikang and the *reth*.

On the evening of the 2nd, the *reth* had come out of the special grass hut into which he had been led with the small girl, his symbolic bride, Nyakwer, 'the girl of the ceremonies,' after the spirit of Nyikang had entered into him and he had been ritually seated on the sacred stool
or throne. He had come out to go up into Athudowic, the hill of the [778]
throne, the great mound which dominates Fashoda, on which are set the four sacred houses which constitute the shrine of the Shilluk kings. With him was a girl, but it was not his bride. In accordance with tradition her place had been taken by a girl of the Ororo clan who had enticed him away. Next morning, when he discovered this, the *reth* sent out to search for his wife, and eventually learnt that she had been taken by Nyikang to his shrine. He sent envoys to ask for her return, and when Nyikang refused, he came out, stepped over a sheep, marched down the hill with his army, stepped over a grey-white bull and challenged Nyikang to battle. Nyikang's drum was then heard, sounding a distinctive beat, the lion call, and Nyikang accompanied by his sons Dak and Cal (a smaller figure made of the grey feathers of a female ostrich) came out from his shrine at the head of his army. After marching round his shrine, from right to left, he advanced to meet the *reth* and his party, who were waiting on the open ground in the middle of the village. Twice Nyikang advanced towards the *reth* and retired again to march round the shrine, while his drum sounded a new insistent beat. The third time the armies joined battle armed with millet stalks, and also, in the case of Nyikang's men, with special rope whips. This time the *reth* prevailed, and seizing Nyakwer who was with Nyikang's army, drew her with him at a run up into the hill, while Nyikang and his men withdrew to his shrine at the other side of the village.

Next morning the stage was set for the last act, the *kel long*

643 tiny, the planting of the spear in the ground, when the new *reth* appeared before the chiefs and notables, received their homage and addresses of exhortation, and in reply gave his undertaking to be a good and just ruler and to work for the welfare of the Shilluk people. The ceremony was simple but impressive. First of all the chiefs and leading notables lined up near the base of the hill, squatting on the
[516] ground with their legs tucked beneath them in the decorous and respectful manner which is distinctive of the Shilluk. Behind them was a similar group of men of lesser importance. Then Nyikang's shield with bells on it, (which is said to be of silver), his long spear, and his throne (the *kwom*), all wrapped in new white cloth to conceal them from the gaze of ordinary men, and his drum, were brought out and taken to the bottom of the hill in front of the waiting chiefs. Here the throne was set up on a giraffe skin. Shortly afterwards the *reth* appeared, clad in a white *lau*, and wearing the royal skin of the female Mrs. Gray antelope, and a new ivory armlet, which had been specially made for the occasion. After stepping over a sheep, he walked down the hill accompanied by Nyikwer and a small party of attendants, and protected by the royal fan made of the wings of the saddle bill stork in the form of a shield. When he reached the throne, he was lifted on to it by two men of the Ororo. The bearer of the fan held it over the *reth's* head to protect him from the sun, while the bearers of the shield, spear and drum stood in front. When all was
537 ready, the shield-bearer advanced towards the rows of chiefs shaking
643 the shield so that the bells jingled, and marked out the first speaker. This was Yor Leiker, the chief of the south, on whom together with Jago Tabo, the chief of the north, who spoke second, had lain the main responsibility for the choice of the new *reth*. These two were followed by some two dozen others, ending up with the chiefs of Tonga and Mwomo (Kaka), the wardens of southern and northern marches. The speeches took the form of exhortations to the new *reth* to deal justly with his people without fear or favour, that the spirit of Nyikang was in him and the people looked to him for good crops and good fortune. And as each speaker finished he stabbed his spear into the ground and left it there. When a speech met with approval, it was acknowledged by the shield bearer and the drummer coming forward and walking round the speaker shaking the bells and beating the drum respectively. When these speeches were over, the *reth* rose up and addressed the company, went over to the bull and stabbed it, and returned once more with his party into Athudowic.

643 The ritual was over. The new *reth* was secure in the occupation

of his throne, the spirit of the *divine* Nyikang, which had been as it 613
were in suspension since the last *reth* Anei Kur had passed over a year ago, had entered into Dak Fadiet, and once again the Shilluk people could resume their normal life.

NOTES.

1. *The body of Nyikang.*

It was explained in our previous article that the body of Nyikang 14
consisted of a bundle of bamboos brought from the Nuba Mountains. 778
I now believe that this is not the case and that only Dak's body is of 775
bamboo. It is more likely that the bundle is of ambatch, indeed this 104
is generally believed. The Shilluk believe that the soul of a mortal can pass into a stick of ambatch, and I am informed by Dr. J. A. Heasty that if a Shilluk dies away from his home his relatives hold a ceremony to make his soul pass into a stick of ambatch, which they take back to his village and bury there.

2. *The vigil of the Beads 'Ouaro,' which are tied on to the reth's ankle.* 301

I interviewed the old *nyireth* who is responsible for these beads. 613
She was reluctant to tell me much, and refused to show me the beads. I asked her, for she had great experience of these matters, how it came that some beads appeared with holes in them, and she told me that as she sat over them at night the ones which appear with holes went 'pop.' She told me that *four* had appeared with holes for *reth* Fafiti in 1918, and one for *reth* Anei and *five* for *reth* Dak. She said *four* or *five* were about right, one was too few, and more than five was too many. The beads with holes are tied on to the *reth's* ankle only during the ceremonies, and after that they apparently close up.

3. *Nyakwer.*

It was not clear in 1944 what became of Nyakwer. It now appeared 114
that she became *bareth*, i.e. will become a wife of the *reth* when she 613
grows up. The girl who was Nyakwer in 1944 still lives in Fashoda, 614
and is now about 13 years old. There was of course a different girl 614
in 1945.

4. *Fashoda.*

The sacred village of Fashoda was most beautifully cleaned and 613
repaired for the installation. All the houses had had their fences 614
renewed, and courtyards replastered with mud, though none of them 778
was rebuilt. The whole of the mound on which the royal shrine of

683
6049
778

Athodowic stands had been plastered with smooth mud from top to bottom.

8. *Fanyikang.*

As in 1944 the sacred shrine of Nyikang at Fanyikang was thrown down and rebuilt after the ceremonies.

The Death and Burial of reth Dak wad FADIET OF THE SHILLUK

By P. P. Howell

121 THE following observations are intended to amplify previous accounts of the death and burial of Shilluk Kings.[1] I was not able on this occasion to follow the ceremonies in detail, for the death of a Shilluk reth and the 123 installation of his successor is carried out over a long period with a mass of 114 ritual observance. I attended some of the ceremonies, had conversations with [643] some of the participants later and am also indebted to Mr. J. L. Baker, then District Commissioner of the Shilluk, for much of the information recorded here.

I have assumed in the reader some knowledge of previous publications 643 on the subject. In broad outline the procedure followed may be summarized 766 as follows:—

(1) Immediately after his death the body of the reth is carried to a village with which he has had previous close association and is there ceremonially immured in a special hut. It should remain there for a period which varies between a few months and over a year.

(2) Meanwhile, the new reth is elected in the traditional manner by an electoral college of hereditary chiefs and, unless internal conflicts follow over the choice, begins to prepare himself for his installation.

(3) The remains of the late reth are then removed from the hut and carried to the village of his birth or adoption, and there buried in in the house formerly occupied by him. Full mourning ceremonies in which a large proportion of the population play their part follow.

(4) Preparations for the installation, involving all sorts of preliminary ritual observance and ceremonies, continue and the final stages are timed to take place after the harvest and before the rains.

643 (5) The formal installation then takes place and consists of the march of Nyikang (the original reth and culture-hero of the Shilluk who is represented in effigy) from Akurwa to Fashoda;

---

[113] [1] See in particular: Munro, P., *Installation of the Ret of the Chol*, *Sudan Notes and Records*, Vol. I, 1918; Howell, P. P., and Thomson, W. P. G., *The Death of a Reth of the Shilluk and the Installation of his Successor*, *S.N. & R.*, Vol. XXVII, 1946; Thomson, W. P. G., *Notes on the Death of a Reth of the Shilluk*, *S.N. & R.*, Vol. XXIX, 1948. Also Evans-Pritchard, E. E., *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan*, Frazer Lecture, 1948, Cambridge University Press.

the flight of the *reth*-elect to Debalo where he remains in seclusion while 643
the warriors of the south (*gol* Nyikang) gather to his aid; the gathering of the host of Nyikang supported by the warriors of the north (*gol* Dhiang); the *reth's* march against Nyikang, the mock battle and his defeat and capture by Nyikang; his submission to Nyikang on the royal stool and his possession by the spirit of Nyikang; his purification and seclusion in a temporary camp outside the capital; his vigil in the sacred mound of Aturwic; a further battle with Nyikang and the establishment of peace between them, and finally, after these important ritual events are over, a public ceremony in which the chiefs of the country publicly declare their allegiance while exhorting him to perform his duties justly.

Each event in this procedure is a further step towards the transference of [775]
the soul of Nyikang from the dead *reth* to his successor, which has always been an essential feature of the Shilluk monarchy. Each stage in the burial and installation ceremonies is another crisis passed, for until the submission has been made, the Shilluk people are in a condition of extreme spiritual danger as well as of actual political danger since at any time civil war may break out over the choice of the new *reth*. This is manifest throughout.

The *reth*-elect, who was chosen by the electoral college shortly after the death of his predecessor, is Kur, son of Fafiti *wad* Yor who was *reth* of the Shilluk from 1917 until 1943. At the time of writing the installation ceremonies are not yet completed and we are here concerned only with the death and burial of *reth* Dak *wad* Fadiet. We must remember, however, that these ceremonies are part of a whole chain of events designed to achieve the safe and successful transference of the spirit of Nyikang from the old *reth* to the new and to bring back to the tribe its former stability.

reth Dak *wad* Fadiet died in Malakal on the evening of May 8th, 1951. 643
His death was not unexpected since he had been ailing for some time and under treatment in hospital for advanced tuberculosis. He was attended personally in hospital by a medical dresser who was also his nephew, and his wives and followers were to some extent excluded from direct contact with him. There was an intense atmosphere of potential danger to his life and a feeling that he would be despatched by his wives before he died a natural death, for it was widely known that he was seriously ill, but I believe that this derived mainly from the medical dresser himself, who, acting in an entirely untraditional capacity, sought to stress the conventional attitudes demanded of him. At any rate there is no evidence that he was put to death or even " assisted to die." [1]

---

[1] See Howell & Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 11 and p. 19, and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

766 Arrangements were made immediately to transport his[A] body to Fashoda, where he should have died, and a steamer left early the next morning. From Fashoda he was carried to Debwor, a small village nearby which had been expressly made for this purpose and the untraditional manner of his passing does not seem to have caused much comment among the Shilluk themselves. The body was seen by Mr. J. L. Baker, District Commissioner of the Shilluk, on the morning of the 10th and he describes it as being shrouded in white cloth and fanned by his sisters with white goose feathers. There was, in fact, some delay in the preparation of the body, since his death had occurred away from the capital, but after some special ivory bangles had been fetched from Fashoda, he was placed according to custom inside a hut in the village of Debwor. The body was laid on a specially constructed bier (*pam*);[1] a rectangular construction lined on the outside with fish-spears and covered with a white cloth. The hut was then sealed up and large numbers of Shilluk, mainly from nearby settlements, arrived to pay their homage in the traditional
[643] manner. The obsequies were completed by the 12th May, and thereafter the electoral college met to elect the new *reth*, *Kur wad Fafiti*.

It is apparently the *reth*-elect who decides when the reburial and
643 mourning ceremonies (*ororo*) are to take place in close consultation with the
644 kinsmen of the late *reth*, for they are materially concerned, and also with
428 the *ororo*[2] who are largely responsible for the funeral arrangements. In fact there was some argument between the *reth*-elect and the immediate family of
766 the late *reth*. The former insisted that all disputes over the inheritance of the royal cattle should be settled before the final mourning ceremonies should take place. During *reth* Dak's illness in hospital, his brother Col and his eldest son Adieng, had taken stealthy measures to hide some of the cattle which, by royal right, should pass to his successor and not to his personal heirs. The decision was made in November and leads me to believe that the
643 prevailing consideration is that the final mourning ceremonies should always be
766 completed by the next harvest, since the installation of the new *reth* should take place shortly after the crops have been gathered.[3]

The period between death and final burial therefore varies according to the time of year in which death takes place.

---

[1] *pam*: Used only for members of the royal clan and for chiefs.

[767] [2] The *ororo*, originally descended from *reth* Ocolo and separated from the royal house. They have special functions to perform at the burial ceremonies and installation of a *reth*. See Howell and Thomson, *idem*, p. 6, and Pumphrey, *The Shilluk Tribe*, pp. 12-14.

[3] On this subject see Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 127, *et seq.*, and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

A[i.e., reth Fadiet's. —Analyst]

Preparations then began at the small village of Kujo in the settlement of 591/
Fanyidwai Pac in the southern Shilluk area. This village had been built by 643
Dak Fadiet himself when he moved from his mother's home in Fathworo at
the invitation of *kwanyireth* Gaw *wad* Ageng of Falo and was occupied by [103]
him from the age of about seventeen until his accession. The word *kujo*
means, literally, "I do not know" and apparently referred to his ignorance of
the future and whether he would become *reth* or not, but expressed his pious
hope.[1] Within this village two huts were built by him and known as his
gol dwong (great house) and occupied by him when in residence. This is 766
common practice with all Shilluk kings and the *gol dwong* eventually becomes
the *kengo*, shrine or tomb, and is always sited in the village of their birth or [778]
adoption. These huts were fenced around in the manner of all royal shrines in
preparation for the burial. These preparations were carried out by the
kinsmen of *reth* Dak under the general supervision of the *ororo*. Yet despite
his wishes, which were well known, his son Adieng caused further trouble
by insisting that his father should be buried in the village of Pa Loc in
Famadh with which he had had close associations. He went as far as to [778]
waylay the *ororo* when they were carrying the *jamkwer*, sacred objects, in
particular the ambatch seat (*kwom*) used by the *reth* and in which his spirit [578]
was said to be, to Kujo, upon which Fanyidwai, the division in which Kujo
is situated and where *reth* Dak was brought up, rose in arms and only the
timely arrival of the chiefs of both areas prevented a clash. It was generally
accepted that Adieng was quite wrong in assuming that his father wished to
be buried at Pa Loc, which would have been untraditional, and his motives
are obscure.[2]

---

[1] I have heard since that Kujo, as a hamlet, was not built until after Dak had been elected. The name Kujo therefore expresses his feeling of uncertainty before his installation at Fashoda.

[2] I am indebted to Father W. Hurst, of the Mill Hill Mission, for further information on this incident. Apparently it is customary for the late *reth's* ambatch seat (*kwom*, but to be distinguished from the sacred stool, also *kwom*, used at the installation ceremonies) to be carried to the place where his remains will finally rest almost immediately after his death. The *reth's* spirit is manifest in this seat and it is often spoken of as the *reth* on this occasion. In the case of Dak *wad* Fadiet, the seat was carried from Fashoda to Famadh where it was placed in a hut which (by the people of Famadh) was reckoned to be his future tomb. The procession was accompanied by villagers on its way, each settlement turning out to follow as far as their boundaries. During the next few days, people from all sides marched to Famadh, *be kemo reth*, "*to visit the reth.*" News soon reached the people of Fanyidwai, who descended on Famadh in force and carried off the seat and other sacred objects. In their haste, some of the sacred beads were upset on to the ground which was considered a misfortune, at any rate by the people of Famadh. It appears then that these objects must be carried to the *reth's* final resting place and where they rest, there he will be buried. *reth* Dak had always shown particular favouritism to Famadh and Pa Loc was regarded as his personal village. The custom that the *reth* should be buried in the village where he was brought up, however, appears to have prevailed.

Just before dawn they set up the four royal drums on end in holes 766.
specially dug in the ground[2] and in the centre of the village opposite the *hengo*. [533]
They were beaten for a short while as a signal that the public ceremonies of
mourning would begin that day. In addition a fire was lit using fire sticks
(*pic mac*), an important ritual item in any Shilluk ceremony, and a sheep was [372]
sacrificed.

I reached Kujo that afternoon just in time to see the *kwa* Nyikir enter
the village again, singing as they came and carrying the spear of Nyikang [778]
wrapped in white cloth and also a basket which I was told contained certain
sacred relics including the bell or Nyikang (*orok Nyikang*). The party
stepped over a sheep held to the ground in front of them[1] and then took up
their position round the drums.

Meanwhile an ox had been tethered near to the drums and a Shilluk
warrior stood by, spear in hand. At a given signal he plunged his spear into
the ox, missing the heart, and causing only a slight wound in the haunch, with [782]
the result that it broke away and had to be despatched outside the village.
No particular attention was paid to this unfortunate incident which might have [787]
been regarded as an ill omen, and immediately the drums began to beat, the
kwa Nyikir skipping round them four times and again stepping on to and
over a sheep tethered to the ground. The main body of spectators consisting
of important persons and the occupants of Kujo and neighbouring villages
then entered the arena. These people carrying millet stalks, sticks and swords, [535]
but no spears, danced round the drums in an anti-clockwise direction singing
the song of Nyikang followed by that of *reth* Dak Nyikang and finally a
new song composed in honour of the deceased. After several minutes of
dancing in this manner, the crowd moved forward and knelt facing the shrine 533
clapping their hands as a sign of grief. These royal mourning songs reflect 539
the Shilluks' attitude towards their kings. *Agwet wad Nyidhongo piny apath* 766
cie Yor wad Nyidhongo labo arieny, "Agwet wad Nyidhongo, the earth is

---

[2] These holes are specially dug beforehand and bells and other sacred objects put
beneath the drums. For normal social events Shilluk drums are laid horizontally [534]
or lean against supports set in the ground.

[1] The significance of this act is not clear and Shilluk merely say that it must be done;
it is "according to custom," *kwong*. I have, however, frequently heard it said that [643
the act, *alodh*, is intended to remove impurities which might be harmful to the *reth*.
The procedure is followed in all sorts of ritual situations in which the *reth* is 783]
concerned. It will be remembered that the *reth* steps over a bull-calf when he
leaves Debalo and over a black bull at Arepejur on his way to Fashoda on the first
day of the installation ceremonies. It will also be remembered that in the old days,
prior to *reth* Fadiet, a man (and a girl) was subjected to the same treatment as the
bulls and sheep, and, though it is not true that he invariably died in the process,
he was never allowed to come into direct contact with the *reth*. See Howell and
Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 54 and p. 79, Note 21.

533 destroyed, Yor son of Nyidhongo, the country is ruined," is one of the main
539 refrains of the song of Yor. Other songs refer to the immortality of their
766 *reths*. Of Dak, son of Nyikang, we hear that he only vanished, he did not die.
775 Of Kweikon, who was killed in battle against the Dervishes at Jebel Gadir,
they sing, *Kurjang* (Kweikon) *cie keny aboi tho nyiwang kecdi tho wadi nini*,
173 "Kurjang the fierce one, when he went out to die he did not fear, fierce one,
death is only sleeping."

766 Warriors from the surrounding settlement of Fanyidwai Pac then entered
in battle order, carrying their shields and spears. After a preliminary march
576 round the arena, spears and shields were discarded and only sticks and millet
stalks carried. This is usual at Shilluk public ceremonies. Dances continued
for three days, men of Fanyikang, Dettim, Fakang and Malakal attended and the procedure was not different. Over two hundred and eighty oxen were slaughtered for the occasion, the tails and some of the horns being hung on the fence surrounding the tomb, while the meat was consumed by the participants.

On the final day, after a great show of dancing and further sacrifices, the
783 ceremony of purification known as *dungo* (or *Yul*) took place. The *bangreth*,
nyireth and also many other kinsmen of the late *reth* were conducted by the
ororo into the centre of the village, where an ox was sacrificed while they sat
round in the centre. According to strict Shilluk custom, this should have
177 been followed by a general shaving of heads. In fact, they did not do so,
302 possibly because the ritual bathing in the river was considered sufficient
purification. No satisfactory explanation for this deviation from custom was forthcoming. It is worth mentioning also that the *okak nam*, latrine, and the *bilo* (or *gol pi*) bath place, of the late *reth*, which are attached to the *gol dwong* and used by him in the past, were fenced off and guarded. Anyone approaching them was seized by the *ororo* and made to pay a small forfeit.

The *reth*-elect, Kur *wad* Fafiti, was present on the first day of the *wowo*,
643 as a gesture of respect to his predecessor, for it is not necessary for the new
766 *reth* to be there and he never appears in public. In particular he may not
see the relics of Nyikang carried by the *kwa* Nyikir, for these are associated with the death and burial of a *reth*, not with the living.

The *kwa* Nyikir then set out for Debwor where a similar ceremony was
766 to be held for the northern Shilluk. I was not myself present and am
indebted to Mr. J. L. Baker for the following account.

"On November 21st, the *ororo* and *kwa* Nyikir had returned to Fashoda for the final act in the obsequies of *reth* Dak and arrived there after several days spent on the road. At about 4 p.m., as at Kujo where the actual bodily

remains of the *reth* had been buried, the *kwa* Nyikir took the field in front 766
of four upturned drums. These drums were either those of the village of
Debwor or had been borrowed from nearby villages. The anti-clockwise
procession of the *kwa* Nyikir then began, each of them hopping over a gourd
(*keny*) which was produced as a substitute for a sheep which is normally used
on these occasions. The drummers, led by *jago* Bol, their chief, then took
up their position round the drums and began to beat them. At Debwor
there was no ritual lighting of fire (*pic*) by fire sticks as at Kujo and which
had preceded all ceremonies relating to the election of the *reth* and the
burial of the old one; possibly the spirit of the late *reth* had left the place.
As the drums began to beat, the chiefs of Gerr—with the exception of the
chief of Muomo who was in charge of the arrangements for the installation [535]
then being made at the shrine at Akurwa and had not come—began to dance
with the shuffling gait of a religious dance (*yieko* as opposed to social dances,
cong tugo) and finally all went up to the hut in which the late *reth's* body had [533]
lain for so many months and sang songs to Nyikang outside it just as the
chiefs of Luak had done outside the burial hut at Kujo and an ox (*nyijuk*)
was speared as a sacrifice. The purport of this song was "we have asked [539]
for cows but instead you have beaten us; please restore to us our cows this
time." This presumably meant that they were asking for better treatment
under the new *reth*, for Dak *wad* Fadiet, "the scourge of Nyikango," had [643]
been a most unpopular figure outside his own area.

With this, the important ceremonies were over and the march of the
clans followed. The sections which participated were Both, Bol, Nyingaro, [614]
Pabur, Agodo, Biu, Thwolong, Yony, Lul, Fashoda, Nyigir, Golbany,
Fadheiang, and Lemo. This took two days. Kodok and Golo did not
come, possibly because they were too much in favour of the house of
Fafiti and had never supported Dak. Thus the pattern of this ceremony
in Gerr followed closely that which had been performed in Luak at Kujo,
only there was no body to bury. The predatory *ororo* had little to do except [767]
the unpleasant one of taking up the bier and skins on which the *reth's*
remains had previously lain and rotted and burying them inside the hut
and of guarding the sacred mound outside the hut. I had thought that this
hut, where the body of the late *reth* had been immured, would be broken down
when the remains had been brought out to carry to Kujo, but this was not so,
and the *ororo* had the ghoulish task of breaking down the door and collecting
the remains into a presentable bundle while the house was still standing. The
hut was still in good condition and will not be broken down until later,
when the *bangreth* Dak will level the hut to ground, though they will continue
to occupy the rest of the village as formerly."

766 This superficial account of the death, burial and mourning ceremonies of the late *reth* Dak *wad* Fadiet adds a few further details to our records of previous burials.[1] There was no fundamental difference in the procedure, but it is worth noting the following points:—

(i) *reth* Fafiti *wad* Yor, who died in 1944, was not placed in a hut for any time, but was buried almost immediately in his personal village.[2] At the time it was said that since his father Yor had died and had not been thus immured, it was correct that his son likewise should be buried immediately. Past precedents are always deemed important by the Shilluk, even to the extent of altering established custom. [183]

(ii) In the case of his successor Anei *wad* Kur, the body was first laid in a hut at Fadwol, a village occupied by the slaves and dependants of his father Kur and was finally buried at Golbainy in his personal village. This was considered a return to normal custom. Both these villages are in the northern Shilluk area (Gerr). Mourning ceremonies were carried out at both, but there was no equivalent ceremony among the southern Shilluk.

(iii) It follows that the *wowo* ceremonies carried out for Dak *wad* Fadiet, first at Kujo in the southern Shilluk area (Luak) and then at Debwor in the northern area (Gerr), were dictated by his previous residence and not by any demand for a repetition based on this division of Shilluk country as might be expected.[3]

(iv) It appears, then, that what might be called the "lying in state," should take place in a village built near to the capital and built largely for the purpose. The burial should take place in the original village of the late *reth*, the home of his mother, or more often the home of his adoption. [643 591]

---

[1] See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 18 *et seq* and Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152.

[2] Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[3] *Id.*, p. 6 and p. 75.

THE ELECTION AND INSTALLATION OF RETH KUR WAD FAFITI OF THE SHILLUK

By P. P. Howell

With an account of the final ceremonies by J. O. Udal

IN a previous article[1] I described the death and burial of *reth* Dak *wad* Fadiet who was installed at Fashoda in January, 1946 and died in Malakal in May 1951. I explained that the events and ceremonies which took place would be treated separately, but that the death of one *reth* and the installation of his successor is all one process in which the soul of Nyikang, the founder of the Shilluk dynasty, passes from the old to the new. The period of the interregnum is full of dangers for the Shilluk people: *piny bugon,* "there is no land," the Shilluk say. The prosperity of the people is dependent on the position in society of the *reth*: he is the symbol of unity and national order and is further responsible for the control of natural phenomena for the benefit of his subjects. Such divine attributes are not automatically acquired by the newly appointed *reth*: he can only acquire them by careful observance of all the rites and ceremonies necessary to assure the transfer and to confirm him in his position. Each stage in these ceremonies is therefore another crisis passed both for the *reth* himself and for his people. It is a further step towards the re-establishment of former stability and only when he has been finally installed at Fashoda is there a return to normal. This state of affairs is manifest at every point of the proceedings which throughout so vividly display these concepts. 643 182

The events may be divided as follows:

(i) The death and "lying in state" of the late *reth* during the period, often several months, when his body lies in a hut in a village specially prepared for the purpose. 766

(ii) The election of his successor.

(iii) The actual burial of the late *reth's* remains in the village of his birth or adoption and the final mourning ceremonies called in Shilluk *wowo.* 766

(iv) The ceremonies which culminate in the actual installation of the new *reth* in the Shilluk capital of Fashoda.

These events have been described in some detail in the case of Fafiti *wad* Yor who was installed in 1917 and died in 1943, in the case of Anei *wad* Kur who succeeded him and who died in 1945 and of Dak *wad* Fadiet who succeeded Anei and died in 1951.[2]

---

[1] *The death and burial of Dak wad Fadiet,* S.N.R. Vol. 33 Part 1.

[2] Munro, P., *Installation of the Reth of the Col.,* S.N.R. Vol. 1. 1918. Howell, P. P. & Thomson, W. P. G., *The death of a Shilluk Reth and the installation of his successor,* S.N.R. Vol. 27. 1946, and Thomson, W. P. G., *Notes on the death of a Reth of the Shilluk,* S.N.R. Vol. 29. 1948. 113

643 I have assumed in the reader some knowledge of these accounts, for the observations which are recorded here are not part of a full and detailed description, but of a note intended to amplify previous records.

643 Although the spirit of Nyikang may appear almost anywhere in Shilluk
country and in the numerous shrines which are found there, I think it is safe
776 to assume that, where the new *reth* is concerned, Nyikang disappears at the
time of the actual burial of the late *reth*. His spirit appears again in the effigy
[778] which is kept at Akurwa, the most important shrine in the country, and remains
there pending the final ceremonies of the installation. Until the obsequies
[172] of his predecessor are completed, the *reth*-elect is not finally accepted, though
he must follow the rules laid down by tradition and must avoid pollution.
[669] Theoretically, though this no longer holds true with the administration of the
present government, his position may at any time be challenged by a rival and
civil war might follow. After the old *reth* has been buried, though the danger
[775] from rivals is always present, he has to face the spirit of Nyikang and to
undergo the trials to which Nyikang will subject him before he is accepted as
a worthy successor and is himself possessed by the spirit. Actual physical
643 danger from other claimants, the danger of an uprising against him, which is
never entirely absent throughout his reign, is at its peak, but wanes as each
stage is successfully passed. All this is expressed by the conventional attitudes
displayed by him and his people and in the ordeals he must undergo. Thus,
though there may be no real danger of armed conflict, the situation demands
that these conventions be followed and throughout there is an atmosphere of
insecurity.

We are here concerned with the election and installation of Kur *wad*
Fafiti. As the son of a *reth* who ruled the Shilluk for so long and so success-
fully[1] and coming immediately after two *reths* whose reigns were short and by
no means universally popular, Kur was a likely candidate and it was generally
accepted that one of the house of Fafiti was the obvious choice. The Electoral
College of chiefs sat at Fashoda immediately after the body of Dak *wad* Fadiet
[115] had been immured in the hut at Debwor. Mr. J. L. Baker, who was present,
describes the procedure as follows:

"On the 13th May, 1951, the Electoral College sat without further delay as the chiefs wanted a new *reth* quickly owing to the approach of the rains. Also the issue was pretty clear from the outset as, apart from one or two chiefs in Golbainy, the Shilluk were solidly in favour of *nyireth* Kur—a man known to me as a very well-behaved and dignified type, from Bapi behind Kodok. The College on this occasion was ten strong (no Tonga people had arrived, but this was not considered important). The following sat:

1. *jago* Yorleiker (Gol Dhiang)
2. *jago* Thabo (Gol Nyikang)
3. *kwanyireth* Cayo (*jung kwareth*)[2]

---

[113] [1] There were occasional conspiracies against Fafiti, notably that of Nyaweilo *wad* Kur in 1932. See Pumphrey, M. E. C., *The Shilluk Tribe*, S.N.R. Vol. 24 p. 5.

[2] *jago jang kwareth*, lit. "the chief of the chiefs of the *kwareth*." The title was apparently given to this branch of the royal house by *reth* Nyakwac.

4. *jago* Aturwel (Fadit Division) 643
5. *kwanyireth* Akwei (Detwok Division)
6. *jago* Ongwany (Muomo Division)
7. *jago* Olwak (Fanyidwai Division)
8. *kwanyireth* Dhikwan (Nyijok Division)
9. *kwanyireth* Yomon (Lul Division)
10. *kwanyireth* Geny (Malakal Division)[5]

I informed them of three candidates who on various grounds were unacceptable to the Government and left them. 648 On the night of the 13th matters were hastened because *nyireth* Kur was summoned by the Electoral College and marched with his followers to Akwabai to await daylight and formal acceptance. I arrived at 7.30 a.m. on the morning of the 14th and found the new *reth* already in Fashoda which he had entered after stepping over a sheep tethered to the ground[6]. I waited for two hours while certain rituals (*kwer*) was performed, including the making of new fire by rubbing fire-sticks 372 together (*pic mac*), water boiled over the fire and used for the shaving of the *reth's* head. The chiefs—a very large cross-section of Shilluk society, for only *kwanyireth* Deng of Apac, and the chiefs of Tonga and Fanyikang had not arrived—together with the men of Kodok and others present shouted their allegiance and a black ox (no entire animal could be found) was speared, stood 787 looking dazed for about five minutes and then fell on its left side (a good omen) just by the royal cattle byre. The chiefs dispersed on the 15th, leaving the *reth* to contemplate for a few days in his father's home, while Fashoda was being organised to house a new *reth* after being deserted for several weeks owing to *reth* Dak's absence in hospital."

Mr. Baker has also remarked that in the list of chiefs given above, only 114 the first three are essential at this meeting. 643 "The others are truly only witnesses or at most proposers of candidates." Thomson, speaking of the election of *reth* Dak, says "it was clearer to me than before that the choice rests entirely with the chiefs of Gol Dhiang and Gol Nyikang[7]." "I doubt whether even the chief of the *kwareth* (*jago jung kwareth*) has any influence: he and the other members of the College have only to listen to a decision.[8]"

I had not the time to attend all the events or to investigate all the aspects 123 of the preparations which led up to the installation on this occasion. 643 Mr. Thomson and I between us had been able to cover much of the ground on the accession of *reth* Anei. Mr. Thomson was able to add further details on the installation of *reth* Dak. It must be remembered, however, that the death of one *reth* and the installation of another takes not less than a year to complete and that the ceremonies are set over a wide field from one end of Shilluk

---

[5] See Howell & Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 31-33.

[6] The significance of this act (*akadh*) is discussed in a previous article: S.N.R. Vol. 33 Part I.

[7] Howell & Thomson, *ibid*, p. 75.

[8] Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 152.

123 country to the other, a distance of about one hundred and sixty miles. Here,
with the help of Mr. J. L. Baker and Mr. J. O. Udal, I can only supplement
643 our previous accounts by recording actual observations made on this occasion
with additional information from Shilluk who attended. Mr. Baker was
unfortunately transferred to another district a few days before the final
ceremonies.

Before describing the events as they occurred on this occasion, it will be as well to summarise the main features of the ceremonies according to traditional practice. In the installations of the various Shilluk *reths* of which we have records there has been no great deviation from the general principles and what differences are found concern the actual timing and minor alterations in ritual.

The rôle of Nyikang

643 We have already seen that when the soul of Nyikang has finally left the person
of the late *reth*, he appears in effigy at Akurwa. This effigy, together with that of Dak,
776 son of Nyikang, made of bamboo and ambatch surmounted by huge plumes of ostrich
feathers[a], sometimes appear in public during the lifetime of a *reth*: normally they are
778 dormant and their principal functions are concerned with the installation ceremonies.
Nyikang is everywhere, but for the moment his personality is concentrated in this effigy.
To the Shilluk the effigy is Nyikang, so that in all our accounts we have always spoken
of Nyikang meaning both the effigy and the spirit: the two are indistinguishable.
[781] Throughout the ceremonies the effigies are treated by the Shilluk with a mixture of
hilarity and dread; mixed emotions which are always apparent. When all the preparations
have been completed, Nyikang and Dak are carried forth from the shrine at
Akurwa and beat the bounds of Shilluk country to the north. They are carried by
[614] men of the *kwa* Nyikwom and surrounded by a bodyguard of the same clan armed
with whips to clear the people from their path. They then march southwards on
Fashoda.

The flight of the reth *to Debalo*

As soon as the *reth* hears that Nyikang draws near, he abandons the capital and
643 retreats to the village of Debalo a few miles south of Arepejur, the watercourse which
is the boundary between the two ceremonial divisions of Shilluk country, Gol Dhiang
[631] (the north) and Gol Nyikang (the south). These divisions are of great importance in the
installation ceremonies and on other occasions have no real significance. The *reth* is
always supported in the conventional hostilities which follow by the occupants of Gol
Nyikang, and Nyikang, in his march from Akurwa to Fashoda is supported by Gol
Dhiang; *gol*, literally "homestead," and a word used to describe the smallest domestic
unit of Shilluk society, here merely means "home" or "country of." The origin of
these two divisions is historical and the names themselves have no direct connection with
the conventional opposition displayed during the installation. The two ceremonial
divisions do not correspond exactly (though nearly) with similar divisions, Gerr and
Luak, which have a periodic significance in quite another context[b]. At Debalo, the
reth remains in strict seclusion for three days, guarded by day and night, and the village
is not open to anyone who is not a personal attendant or from the divisions of Gol
Nyikang. The belief that he is in danger is expressed in a number of ways, including
the lighting of fires all round the village at night and the fact that although a special
house is built and most carefully decorated in the royal manner to receive him, he
actually sleeps in one of the more dilapidated and less conspicuous houses.

---

[a] See Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 159.

[b] Howell & Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 75 (I).

The march of the armies and the mock battle

643 After three nights in seclusion in Debalo, during which his followers are mustering from the south, the *reth* is challenged by Nyikang to come forth to fight and messengers are sent for this purpose. Accompanied by *Nyakwer,* "the girl of the ceremonies," who plays an important part in subsequent events, by various relics of Nyikang, by his shield and spear-bearers and his army, the *reth* marches on the capital, crossing Arepejur on the way, and attacks the army of Nyikang by then drawn up just west of Fashoda. In this battle he is defeated, captured by Nyikang and carried off to the shrine of Nyikang (*Cerfuc*) nearby.

The substitution on the sacred stool

[778 775] In front of this shrine the sacred stool of Shilluk kings, the *kwom*, is set shrouded from the public by a canopy of white cloth. Nyikang is placed upon this, but after a time is whisked away and the *reth* takes his place. This act of substitution and enthronement, perhaps the most significant act of all the ceremonies, is the point where the *reth* is possessed by the spirit of Nyikang.

The temporary camp

[783 644] Shortly after this the *reth* is carried to a temporary camp (*Adul*), where, after a sacrifice, he is washed and purified. He remains there in strict seclusion, guarded by the *ororo.*

The vigil in Athurwic

On the next evening, he ascends into *Athurwic*[1], the imposing mound which dominates the capital and on which are four well-built houses. It is said that he is enticed there by a woman of the *ororo,* leaving *Nyakwer* behind, forgotten and neglected. After two nights, word is brought to him that Nyikang has seized her on the grounds that she has been married with cattle from the royal herd: these are his, Nyikang's property, not that of a man who has not yet been confirmed in his position as *reth.*

The final struggle with Nyikang

[614 651] Challenged, the *reth* comes down from the mound with his followers, while Nyikang moves forward to attack him right in the centre of Fashoda. In a furious battle which follows, the *reth* succeeds in wresting *Nyakwer* from Nyikang and retires into *Athurwic* once more. Shortly afterwards, Nyikang ascends the mound and makes his peace with the *reth* and there follows a ceremonial inspection of the houses of the capital and fines are imposed on those clans who have not fulfilled their obligation to repair them. The *reth* has now been accepted by Nyikang whose official and public functions are over. Later he retires again to Akurwa.

Speech Day

631 643 On the final day, the chiefs of the country assemble below the mound and the *reth*, accompanied by his drummer and shield-bearer, comes down to meet them. Each chief in turn addresses the *reth* and, after declaring his allegiance, exhort him to do his duty and to treat his people justly. The *reth* is then conducted again round the houses of Fashoda over which he now has complete control.

643 In this brief summary, I have drawn attention only to the most important features of the installation. There is naturally a wealth of ritual carried out at each stage of the ceremonies. From the accounts of the accession of *reth* Fafiti in 1917, *reth* Anei in 1944 and *reth* Dak in 1946, we have a clear picture of the slow and colourful process by which a *reth* is chosen and installed. Each stage has its religious and secular aspects and in the short description of the installation of *reth* Kur *wad* Fafiti which follows, it will be

---

[1] Variously spelt: *Aturwic, Athudowic, Athurwic.*

643 seen that in general all these essential stages were faithfully fulfilled, though there was some variation in detail.

The Installation of Reth Kur wad Fafiti

Preparations for the installation began almost as soon as the late *reth* was laid in the hut at Debwor and reached a crescendo of activity towards the end of the year. One of the most important ceremonies is the expedition to *podhe manyo* which lies to the north of the present Shilluk boundaries. [173] According to tradition, this region was originally occupied by *reth* Dak, son of Nyikang, or at least regarded as legitimate raiding country, which in fact *podhe manyo* means. Mr. J. L. Baker has added to our information on this subject[12] and writes as follows:

"One of the major ceremonies (*kwer*) prior to the installation does not appear to have been recorded. I was not able to attend myself, but I am creditably informed that this is what happens.

"On the return of the men of Akwabai from *podhe manyo*, having brought silver wristlets and a number of rings (*gwel*) such as are normally worn by important Shilluk on the first knuckle of each finger, they visit Abworo and then Fashoda. Here the *reth* calls the *bung* Nyikango (slaves of Nyikang) and orders them to take this silver to the shrine of Akurwa where it remains. I suggest that represents the spoils of victory of the raiding party.

[778] "Then the effigy of Dak (the old one) is taken to Nyikang's island to find Nyikang. He is carried in a Shilluk canoe by the *kwa* Nyikwom and accompanied by the men of Moro whose job it is to dive for Nyikang when the time comes. When they arrive at the island, which is just north of Geiger,[13] the small drum (that of Nyikang) is beaten near the bank of the river and Dak watches the water. A white bird (no special kind) should appear to show that Nyikang is near.

643
776
778

"The diver then picks up the *jam* Nyikango (offerings for Nyikang) and searches for Nyikang under the water. If Nyikang is pleased to accompany the party, he comes out of the water and, having accepted the offerings, is wrapped in cloth and taken to Akurwa, escorted by Dak and the *kwa* Nyikwom. At Akurwa, it is for him to give his agreement to the proposed *reth* as candidate for the installation. The stage is now set and all that remains is the collection of hippo-hide whips (*angero*) for the *kwa* Nyikwom, which must be prepared for them, and the making of the new effigy of Nyikang. Without these preliminaries and the consent of Nyikang, signified by his presence, the installation could not take place."

By mid-January, 1952, these preparations and those which concern the *reth* were nearing completion. The installation was due to take place. There were, however, the usual and inevitable delays and it was not until towards the end of that month that Nyikang and Dak, represented in the effigies, came

---

[12] See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.* p. 37..

[13] On the east bank and well north of the present boundaries of Shilluk country.

forth from the shrine and marched northwards to beat the bounds of Shilluk 643
country in Muomo. The march on Fashoda then began. It is accepted custom [776
among the Shilluk that Nyikang and his followers may seize cattle, sheep or 778]
goats which cross their path (most Shilluk are wise enough to keep them
out of the way) or to demand them as offerings together with other smaller [425]
gifts from the occupants of the villages through which they pass. This licensed
plundering, which is often abused beyond the bounds of piety by Nyikang's
retinue, is treated by the Shilluk with admirable tolerance, for they must know
that such offerings go to fill the stomachs and pockets of the *kwa* Nyikwom
It is a sacred duty cheerfully accepted. At one point on the march at Moro, [578]
however, their demands were thought to be excessive and were resisted, a
demonstration which nearly ended in armed conflict and which delayed the
party for a while.[34] They had left Akurwa on the 28th January and reached
Adodo, south of Kodok, on the 4th February, and the next day, in accordance
with custom, the *reth* fled to Debalo.

As we have seen, it is traditional for the *reth* to remain three nights in
Debalo. In fact, *reth* Kur had already made it known that he did not intend
to spend more than one night there, on the grounds that his father, Fafiti, had
spent no more. Fafiti's break with tradition had been dictated by the fear that
he might be deprived of office or killed by a rival and the natural anxiety
of the administrative authorities to get through the ceremonies as quickly as
possible. In those days, the likelihood of civil war was much greater and [669]
Fafiti had been urged to cut the installation ceremonies to a minimum.[35]
Precedents of this kind count heavily in subsequent customary procedure and [178]
in this and in previous installations it was noticeable that each *reth* was
inclined to follow the procedure of his father, not that of his immediate
successor.[36] This is at least one of the explanations of the variations in detail
which are apparent when we compare the installation ceremonies of those
reths of the Shilluk of which records exist.

Reth Kur's decision to remain only one night at Debalo had two main [793
effects. In the first place, fewer of those who seek absolution for the sins of 783]
the flesh (notably the seduction of unmarried girls) were able to attend, though
I am told that about fifty persons presented themselves to the *reth* for this purpose]

---

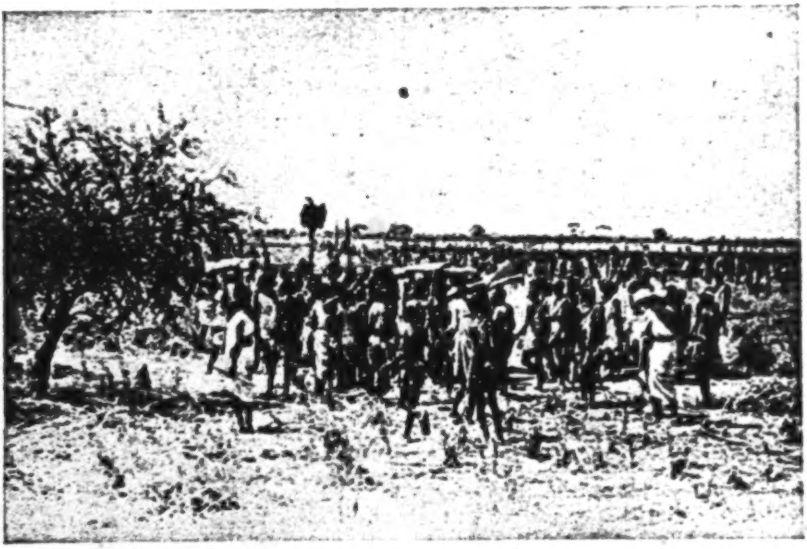
[34] It appears that the effigy of Nyikang was damaged in the affray and had to be taken back to Akurwa for repairs.

[35] Mr. Udal writes: "When I visited the *reth* on the 26th January, he announced his intention of spending three nights at Debalo. However, when on the 2nd February there was still no definite news of the whereabouts of Nyikang, he did not attempt to disguise his irritation at the dilatoriness of the *kwa* Nyikwom and said he would follow the precedent of his father and sleep only one night at Debalo. Accordingly, after news of Nyikang's arrival at Adodo on the evening of the 4th February had reached Fashoda, *reth* Kur *wad* Fafiti set out before sunrise for Debalo and it was arranged between the messengers of the *reth* and Nyikang that the battle should take place on the morning of the 6th February." *Reth* Kur's impatience may have been genuine, but I do not think he would have attempted to alter established custom if he had not the precedent of his father before him.

[36] For example, see Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

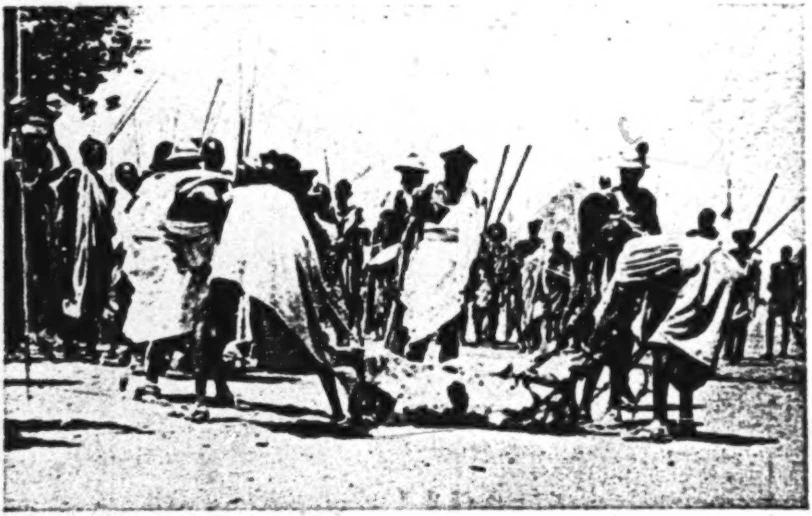
24: Howell E-5 (1951-1952) 1953 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

643



Nyikang and Dak advance to meet the Reth's forces.

291
643



At Debalo. The Reth Steps over a bull before his departure.

[FACING p. 196]

643 purpose. Secondly, it was clear that many persons from the southern Shilluk assumed that he would remain there for at least three nights before proceeding to Fashoda and were therefore too late to attend the ceremonies.

I reached Kwom, near Debalo, on the morning of the 6th February. At that early hour there was little activity, though many of the *reth's* followers
64 were to be seen clustered round Debalo. There followed the usual delay while *kwa* Ojul, the clan whose duty it is to provide a heifer which is led backwards
643 in front of the *reth* as he leaves for Fashoda,[11] were still arguing about the number of spears and other articles they should receive as their reward; *kwa* Okelo who provide *Nyakwer*, the "girl of the ceremonies," who accompanies the *reth* and plays such an important part in the installation, were also late. Finally,
643 towards midday, all was ready. Messengers had arrived to say that Nyikang was on the move, and after stepping over the bull and the performance of the usual ritual associated with this occasion, the *reth* and his company set out for Fashoda. I watched the procession depart and as far as I could make out the formation of the bodyguard and the position of the clans was the same as in 1944, though a great deal less orderly in the initial stages of the journey.
[123] Since Mr. J. C. N. Donald (who had attended the installation of *reth* Anei and of *reth* Dak) and Mr. Udal were present, I decided to leave the *reth's* party and to motor northwards to follow the army of Nyikang. Mr. Udal has recorded the details of the *reth's* march as follows:

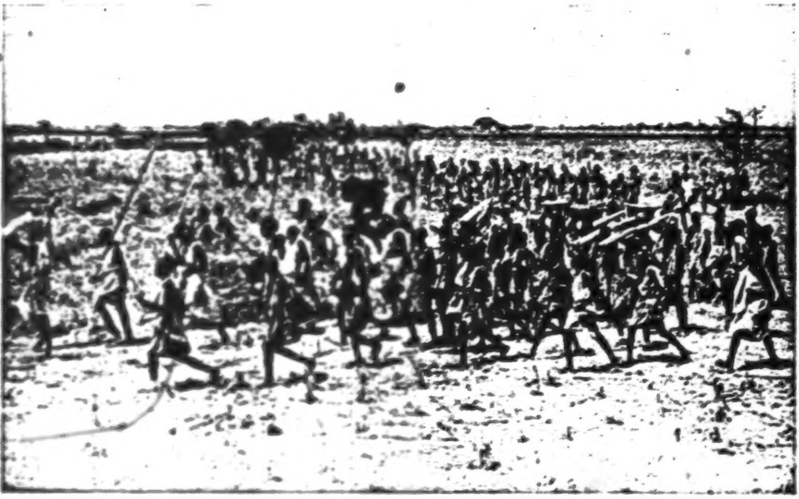
"In fact it was not until nearly 12.30 p.m. that the procession finally set off to meet the forces of Nyikang. The *reth* appeared wearing a Mrs. Gray antelope skin surrounded by his family entourage including *Nyakwer*, her luggage carried on a retainer's head and the shield-bearer carrying the small shield of Nyikang wrapped in white cloth. In addition to his own police in
[644] their scarlet *laus*, the *reth* on his own initiative had arranged that the two Government police, stationed at Debalo for the occasion, should escort him and they accompanied him throughout the ceremonies. A bull was efficiently cast for the *reth* to step over and with that the procession moved off at a
[184] brisk pace. There was no stop for refreshments at the merchant's shop at Kwom which had been honoured by *reth* Anei on his way to the installation in 1944. Not until the *khor* Arepejur was reached did the cavalcade, deployed in extended line, come to a halt.

"The time was now about 1 p.m. On the northern bank of the watercourse the forces of Nyikang could be seen drawn up in wide formation and the effigies stood out distinctly at some quarter of a mile's distance. Two messengers from Nyikang were waiting in the bed of the watercourse, and the black bull, over which the *reth* must step, was also in evidence. A brief conversation was held with Nyikang's messengers who then returned to their master. In the meantime singularly inadequate attempts were made to cast the black bull, which delayed the proceedings by eluding its captors and running away down *Khor* Arepejur, from which it was only retrieved with difficulty. Finally it was well and truly cast, and the *reth's* forces crossed the watercourse with much shouting and advanced to meet the forces of Nyikang."

---

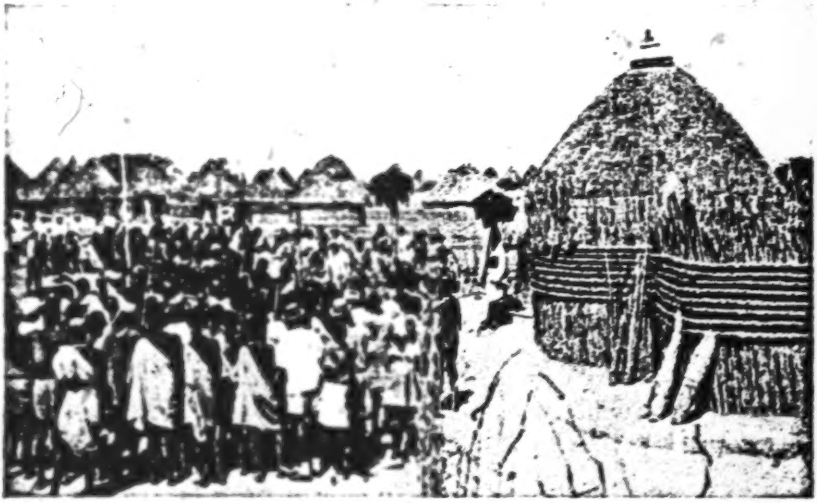
[11] See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-53.

291
643
482



Opposite Fashoda. The *kwe* Nyikwom lead Nyikang and Dak in their advance against the Reth.

291
643
342
778



The substitution on the stool. Nyikang has withdawn and stands on the right. The Reth is still seated on the stool underneath Nyikang's spear (wrapped in white cloth) on the left.

Photograph: J. C. N. Donald

[Facing p. 197]

In the meantime, I had driven along the road until, about two miles 643
north of Fashoda, I met Nyikang, Dak and their followers moving at great
speed towards the capital. I followed them for a while and then took up a 541
good position immediately west of Fashoda in the open grass where I knew
the opposing forces would meet. Nyikang soon arrived and halted, drums
beating and the shield-bearer dancing forward in defiance of the *reth* and his
army who were by then appearing over the crest of the northern bank of
Arepejur. The *kwa* Nyikwom, armed with whips, then dashed forward and [293
those armed with millet stalks met in a disorderly and not very spectacular 411]
clash well to the west of the main party. Then, as the *reth* and his personal
guards drew near, Nyikang and Dak rushed up to him, surrounded him and
bore him off towards Fashoda, while a furious battle took place between the
opposing forces, the *kwa* Nyikwom lashing out with their whips without
mercy.

Outside the shrine, which had been beautifully cleaned and decorated for 643
the occasion, the royal stool (*kwom*), wrapped in white cloth, was ready. As
Nyikang and his captive drew near, the white canopy was thrown around [778]
them. It was therefore not easy to see what happened, and it would have been
unseemly to push behind the screen, but it was clear that the substitution had
taken place a few minutes later when Nyikang withdrew into the shrine.

A short time afterwards, the *reth's* feet were bathed and he was carried
to the temporary camp opposite. He emerged again almost immediately to
make passes over the bull, covered in white cloth and a leopard-skin, with the [781]
traditional weapons handed to him for the purpose, and then entered *Adul*
once more, while the beast was sacrificed, falling on its side about fifty yards [783]
away. The man responsible for spearing it" was seen running rapidly towards
the river where he must wash the blood from the blade and purify himself in
the water. A fire was then lit inside one of the two small huts in the camp and
water was heated in which the *reth* was bathed."

This ended the first day of the installation. The *reth* was safely in seclusion within *Adul*, and although not free from danger yet, had successfully passed one of the most dangerous periods of the whole procedure. The only other ceremony performed that day was the lighting of fire outside the camp

---

" From the *kwa* Nyiboc of Limo.

" In conversation with Shilluk after the event, I was informed that during his stay at 773
Adul, the temporary camp, the *reth* is expected to have sexual intercourse with one
of his half-sisters. The custom (*kwong*) is said to derive from Dak, who, infuriated 835
by Nyikang's action in giving his mother, Akec, to Cal (or Burro, another brother),
took one of his half-sisters who eventually gave birth to Ocolo. Nyikang was
apparently outraged by this action, but decreed that thereafter every *reth* should take
one of his half-sisters. This story is recorded by Hofmayr (see Bibliography), but
I had not realised that the act—a ritual breach of the rules of exogamy and called
akwalo—actually takes place. It is also said that members of the *kwareth* have to do
likewise when they are appointed chiefs (*jago*) though it is admitted that the woman
is usually a more remote kinswoman than a half-sister. The act is none the less one
of incest. The matter needs further investigation.

643 by the *ororo* and *kwareth* of Fashoda, a ceremony which I did not attend, though I had seen it done at the installation of *reth* Anei.

If there are any observations to be made on this day's events, they are that the whole occasion was carried out in a much less serious manner than previously. The participants appeared to be light-hearted and the dangers to the *reth*, though carefully stressed, were obviously not taken so seriously. If there is any explanation of this, it is probably that the Shilluk, who have undergone the very real strain of no less than three installations in the last seven years, are now used to these events and do not regard them with such awe as before. It is also possible that Kur, as the son of a successful and popular father, was a candidate accepted with a greater degree of unanimity and calm than either of his two immediate predecessors. The number of participants seemed much less than before, possibly for the reasons already [164 given, and because many people from the south were barred from coming 744] owing to cerebro-spinal meningitis. One had the impression that the number of Nyikang's followers was much greater than those of the *reth*, no doubt partially due to the latter's unexpected decision to stay only one night in Debalo and the fact that this affected his own followers rather than those of Nyikang who had marched through the northern Shilluk. Also, perhaps, because Kur, as son of Fafiti, is popular in the north while he may be less so in the south.

I was not able to attend the final ceremonies. In the account by Mr. Udal [123] which follows, it will be seen that *reth* Kur spent only one night up in the [184] mound of *Athurwic*, with the result that the ceremonies of installation from the point where he fled to Debalo had taken only five days instead of the customary nine.

THE FINAL CEREMONIES

(By J. O. Udal)

The Battle for Nyakwer

643 The *reth* was anxious to avoid any further delays and decided to spend only one night in *Athurwic*. The battle for *Nyakwer* thus took place on the 541 third day of the installation ceremonies, not on the fourth as is usual. I arrived at about 8 a.m. on the morning of the third day and was able to exchange greetings with the *reth* from a distance although he could not leave *Athurwic; jago* Yorkeiker *wad* Ajang thought that the battle would begin very soon, but the inevitable delays followed and it was not until about 9.15 a.m. that Nyikang's drum was heard being beaten in his shrine. The *kwa* Nyikwom began to assemble outside the shrine from which Nyikang and Dak soon emerged and with them *Nyakwer*, dressed in a Mrs. Gray antelope skin. *Nyakwer* is the central figure of the second battle. In the morning, the *reth*, remembering *Nyakwer*, whom he had forsaken for a girl of the *ororo*, sent for her. The news was brought that Nyikang had abducted her and an ultimatum was forthwith sent by the *reth* to Nyikang demanding her immediate return. Both sides then prepared for battle.

Thus Nyikang emerged from his shrine in an angry mood. The people 643
fell in procession behind the effigies and, dancing and singing, circled the 541
shrine and then set off for the *gol* Onger where the whips of the *kwa* Nyikwom
are stored. Both Nyikang and Dak entered this house, and when they came [778]
out again a third effigy, that of Cal,[illegible] was with them. Cal was the brother of
Dak and his effigy is made with grey (female) ostrich feathers in contrast to [237]
the black feathers of the others. The drum began to beat louder and faster,
the singing increased in tempo and all the time the crowds gathered. Simultaneously at the other end of Fashoda, the *reth's* forces were gathering round the mound, the *reth's* police in their scarlet *laus* again conspicuous on the left flank.

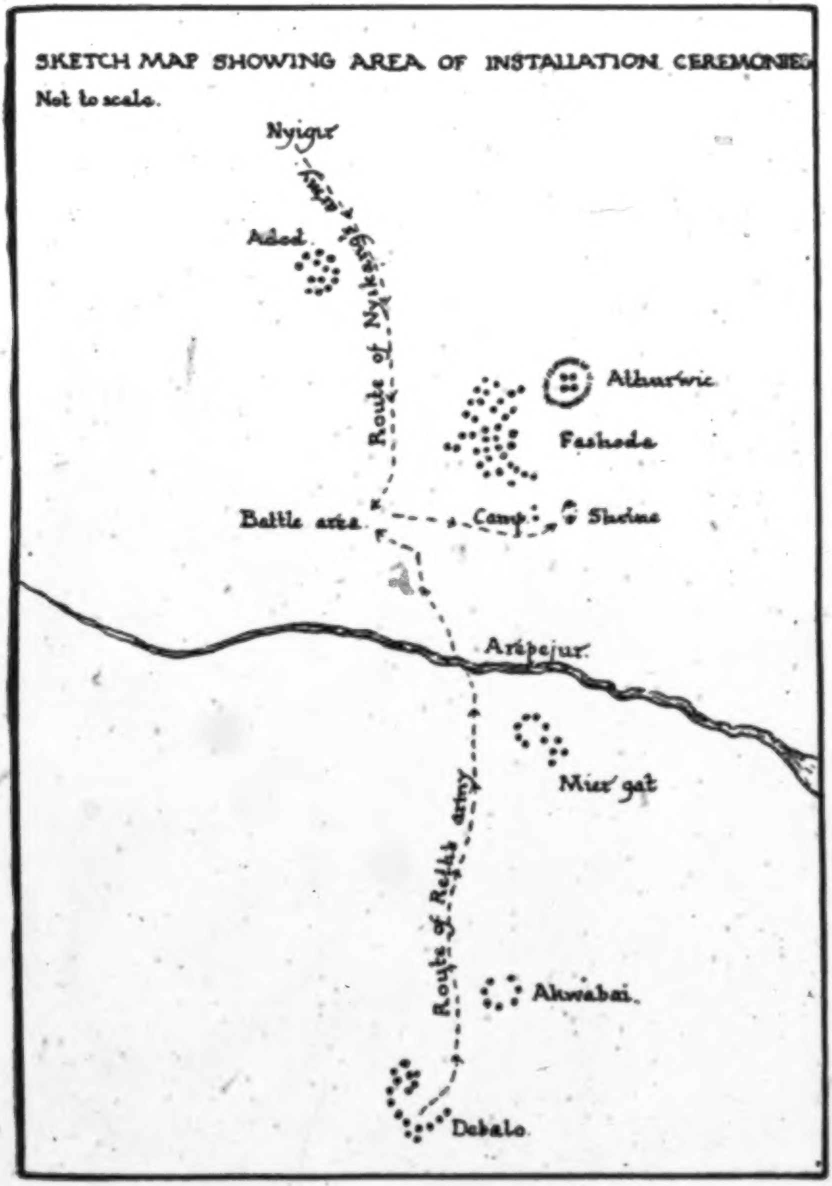
There followed a succession of sallies by the assembled forces of Nyikang and the *reth* from opposite ends of the capital. First Nyikang would surge forward and the shield-bearer of the *reth* would conduct the temporary retirement of the *reth's* forces, rattling the bells inside the shield in defiance of Nyikang. Then it would be the turn of the *reth's* followers to advance menacingly and for Nyikang to withdraw in the same manner. Finally a bull was brought forward to be cast on the ground so that the *reth* could step over it before going on to seize *Nyakwer.*[illegible] Once again the casting was mismanaged and with a disdainful wave of his hand, the *reth* motioned to his retainers to drag the bull out of the way, and swept on to wrest *Nyakwer* from the clutches of Nyikang. Millet stalks began to fly and as the *reth's* party returned to the safety of *Athurwic*, an unsuccessful counter-attack was staged by Nyikang. Its failure was obvious and the drummer then beat the retreat of Nyikang and his men towards the shrine. They did not enter it immediately and although Nyikang had never reached the summit of the mound, he and his followers marched round the shrine and appeared to be about to renew the onslaught. Such forces of the *reth* as remained on the ground seemed to melt away into the host of Nyikang, but somehow the new attack never materialised, despite much drumming and singing, marching and counter-marching for a period of some ten minutes, while the *reth's* guard stood watch on the slopes of *Athurwic.* Nyikang, tired of the proceedings, finally withdrew into his shrine, while Dak, Col and his supporters, perhaps disappointed, gathered outside to sing and dance his praises. The battle for *Nyakwer* had ended.

Speech Day

The sequel of events on this occasion followed former precedents. The 643
reth came down from *Athurwic* surrounded by the *ororo* and sat down on the [237
covered stool, while a fan made from one wing of a saddle bill stork was held to
shade him. He did not, however, step over a sheep as had happened at 293]
previous installations. The chiefs of the country, with the exception of those [63
from the east bank who had been discouraged from attending on account of
the epidemic of cerebro-spinal meningitis there, sat opposite the *reth* on the 731]
ground at about twenty-five yards distance.

[illegible] See Howell and Thomson, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

[illegible] *Ibid.* p. 79, Note 21.



SKETCH MAP SHOWING AREA OF INSTALLATION CEREMONIES

Not to scale.

Nyigir
Route of Nyikango's army
Aded
Akurwic
Fashoda
Battle area
Camp
Shrine
Arépejur
Mier gat
Route of Reth's army
Akwabai
Debalo

[FACING p. 200]

537 *Jago* Yorleiker, the chief of Gol Nyikang, rose to make the first speech,
643 carrying a spear in his hand. A delay occurred as the *reth's* drummer was
missing and had to be found. Then *jago* Yorleiker, followed by *jago* Thabo
of Golbainy and titular chief of Gol Dhiang, and other chiefs in order of
[411- precedence came forward to address the *reth* on his installation. Nearly all
184] carried presentation spears which were thrust into the ground in front of the
reth, though one or two, as in the case of *kwanyireth* Akwei Anyong of Detwok,
placed a bead on the ground. The speeches were on the whole short, and took
the form of exhortations to the *reth* to emulate his father's example and to
work closely with the Government; to pay attention to his elder advisers; to
visit all the Shilluk lands and to avoid favouritism; to deal fairly with the
[576] Shilluk. As each speaker finished he was applauded by the rattling of Nyikang's
shield and the beating of the drum, for longer or shorter periods according to
the quality, or perhaps, acceptability, of the speech. Those who were most
honoured were accompanied back to their place by the shield-bearer before
the latter turned to signal out the next speaker. Last of all the chiefs to
[631] speak were *jago* Ongwany *wad* Kak and *jago* Kwathi *wad* Kudjok of Tonga,
the traditional wardens of the Shilluk Marches at the northern and southern
extremities of their country.

Finally the *reth* rose to speak. He walked forward to where rows of spears
[428] had been stuck in the ground and there, amid reverent interjections of *wuo*
from the assembled Shilluk, he harangued the chiefs for their failure to produce
the cattle of the late *reth* which were his just due.[*]

As he spoke he paced backwards and forwards along the lines of spears,
evoking grudging grunts of agreement to his apparently rhetorical questions.
Having delivered his speech, he stepped back, took hold of the ceremonial
643 sword and made passes over the back of the white bull with a black face which
782 had been tethered on his right. A Shilluk then speared the bull, again with
considerable lack of skill, and the *reth* departed on his tour of the royal houses
[578] of Fashoda. A slight altercation broke out over who was to have which spears
presented by the Chiefs, but the installation of *reth* Kur *wad* Fafiti, the thirty-second *reth* of the Shilluk, was over.

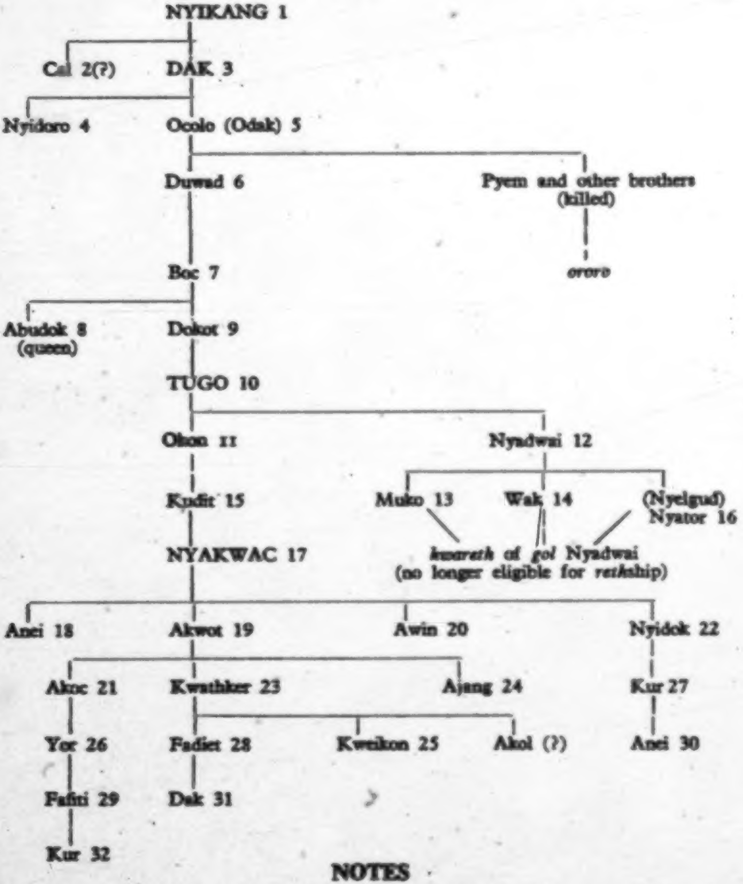
---

[*] As explained in a previous article (*S.N. & R.*, Vol. 33, Part 1) the immediate and personal heirs of the late *reth* had attempted to conceal many of the cattle which are royal property and should go to his successor.

173

APPENDIX I.

REVISED LIST OF SHILLUK RETHS.


NYIKANG 1
Cal 2(?)
DAK 3
Nyidoro 4
Ocolo (Odak) 5
Duwad 6
Pyem and other brothers (killed)
Boc 7
ororo
Abudok 8 (queen)
Dokot 9
TUGO 10
Okon 11
Nyadwai 12
Kudit 15
Muko 13
Wak 14
(Nyelgud) Nyator 16
NYAKWAC 17
kwareth of gol Nyadwai (no longer eligible for rethship)
Anei 18
Akwot 19
Awin 20
Nyidok 22
Akoc 21
Kwathker 23
Ajang 24
Kur 27
Yor 26
Fadiet 28
Kweikon 25
Akol (?)
Anei 30
Fafiti 29
Dak 31
Kur 32

NOTES

173
643
1. Shilluk *reths* prior to Tugo are listed according to tradition, but there are some inconsistencies. Cal, for example, who is said to be a half-brother of Dak, lived at Dinyo near Tonga, but most Shilluk say that he was

173 never *reth*. He appears in effigy during the final ceremonies of installation. 643 Nyidoro's position in the genealogy is doubtful; his burial place is unknown, but *reth* Fadiet built a shrine for him. Ocolo is often called Odak, which sometimes leads to confusion with Dak son of Nyikang. Odak's sons, with the exception of Duwad, were killed in battle and their sons were degraded to the status of *ororo*. Pyem is the ancestor of the *kwa* Nyimol the main *ororo* 114 clan. Hofmayr also mentions Akac (son of Duwad or Boc), but he was never *reth*. Abudok, eldest daughter of Boc, is said to have ruled the Shilluk and to have maintained her position by concealing the sex of Dokot, then only a child, who was dressed by her in a girl's apron.

114 3. Tugo (Hofmayr gives his dates as 1690-1710, but these are, of course, not authenticated) was the first Shilluk *reth* to have a settled capital and founded Fashoda. From him sprang the two main branches of the Royal House, *gol* Okon and *gol* Nyadwai. The latter are still *kwareth* even though no *reth* can now be chosen from their numbers; *reth* Fadiet tried unsuccessfully to degrade them to *ororo*. Some Shilluk mention Ngu Akwo, son of Nyadwai, as being *reth* after Wak, while Nyadwai's brother Ngu Aba never ruled. Nyelgud is a nickname for Nyator who is alleged to have been *reth* after Kudit.

4. All those eligible for the throne are from the House of Okon. Some alterations to previously recorded genealogies should be made. Yor, called Adodit, was son of Akoc, not son of Kwathker. Kweikon, son of Kwathker, should be included; Akol, a rival of Yor and later of Kur, was never installed at Fashoda, though some kind of installation ceremony was held for him by the southern Shilluk at Fanyidwai. Deidunyal, son of Ajang, was elected, 643 but never installed and is not included. In fact many candidates for the throne were backed by only one element in Shilluk society, but failed to get themselves installed and these should not be included.

APPENDIX II.

Bibliography of the Shilluk.

113 BANHOLZER, P. "*Im Lande der Schilluk*," *Anthropos*, 1911.

——— and GIFFEN, J. K. "*The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*," 1905.

BELTRAME, G. "*Il fiume Bianco e i Denka*," Verona, 1881.

CANN, Capt. G. P. "*A day in the life of an idle Shilluk*," *S.N. & R.* Vol. 12, 1929.

CRAZZOLARA, Rev. Fr. J. P. "*Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Religion und Zauberei bei den Schilluk*," *Anthropos*, 1932.

EVANS-PRITCHARD, E. E. "*The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk*," Frazer Lecture, Camb. 1948.

GRIFFITH, NORA. "*The title of the Reth*," *S.N. & R.* Vol. 19, 1936.

HOFMAYR, W. "*Zur Geschichte, Religion und sozialen und politischen Gliederung des Stammes der Schillukneger*," *Anthropos*, 1910.

——— "*Religion der Schilluk*," *ibid.*, 1911.

——— "*Die Schilluk. Geschichte, Religon und Leben eines Niloten-Stammes.*" Mödling b. Wien, 1925.

INSTALLATION OF A NEW SHILLUK KING

[The following account, by a Shilluk pupil at Rumbek Secondary School, originally appeared in the *Rumbek Magazine* for 1954, and is reprinted with the permission of the Ministry of Education. It is, so far as is known, the first written account of the ceremony by a member of the Shilluk people. The article has been read by Dr. P. P. Howell, who considered it to be of sufficient interest to warrant publication in *Sudan Notes and Records.*] 114

When the Reth of the Shilluk dies, all the senior chiefs of the thirteen divisions of the country are summoned to Fashoda, the chief reigning village (pan duong), by the District Commissioner and the Head Chief of Fashoda Division, to attend the election of the new Reth. 643

The new Reth is not to be elected from among the late Reth's sons, but from another branch of the Royal Family. In the election the elder son of a Reth and a left-handed Prince cannot be elected, according to traditional custom. A woman has no claim to the Rethship. It happened once in the past that there was one Queen called Abudhok who reigned in Fashoda, but from thenceforward no woman has held the Rethship. [644] [562]

As soon as the Nyireth (Prince) is elected Reth he is taken to Fashoda, where he remains quietly until the late Reth's wuowo (mourning dance) has been held. After this, the installation of the new Reth, or the coronation ceremony, follows. Before the coronation the people of Padhiang, north-west of Fashoda, are sent to the Nuba mountains to fetch some holy bamboos which are used in the coronation, and the blacksmiths of Golbanyo at the northern side of Fashoda, and those of Nyinkango[1] and Both in the south, are busy making the coronation spears. First comers from among the Nyikango's army (Kwanyikwom) pass to Obay in the southern part of the country to bring some palm leaves for making whips with which they beat people during the coronation. In Debalo Kwom there are some people carving ivories. The performers of the coronation fix some branches of thorn trees in front of their villages on the roads, being authorized by tradition to stop any man passing along that road without his giving an offering to them. The people of Tonga paddle far south in their canoes to Lake No to fetch the ambatch (abomi Nyikango). [765]

After the accomplishment of all these things, the Reth is taken to Debalo Kwom south of Fashoda, a village where the coronation seat is kept. In Debalo there is a little herd of cattle from Pathaw which the Reth looks after, and he is treated roughly like a small boy by the head chief of Debalo, before he takes his position as Reth. Nobody is allowed to go among these cows or to take any fire from among them. Any unfortunate fellow going near them is seized by Kwa Nyuth and made to give something. These cows go together with the Reth to Fashoda where he looks after them again. [233]

In this installation there are two rival armies, the army of the Reth and the army of Nyikango. Nyikango's army brings the images of Nyikango and Dak his son from Akurwa, a village in the northern part of the country. Without the power of Nyikango and Dak the new king cannot be crowned. When the party leaves Akurwa they have four resting places before they reach Fashoda. In the last, Adot Nyigir, two miles from Fashoda, they await the arrival of the Reth's army from Debalo.

---

[1] Nyikango was the founder of the Shilluk Kingdom. At his death he is said not to have been buried but to have disappeared in the sky.

643 When the Reth's army begins to move out to meet Nyikango's, all the people of Debalo run away clapping the handles of their spears, meaning that the Reth will never return to Debalo until he dies. As he goes out a bull is laid down on his path, whereupon he walks over it in front of the procession, pulling another bull by the tail. The latter is covered with white cloths and is meant to reach Fashoda, being dragged in this manner—Fashoda is about two and a half miles from Debalo. The spear from the shrine at Bol and another from Lul are also brought for the coronation ceremony.

Now scouts are sent to see if Nyikango's army is approaching and to report the news back to the Reth. In the Reth's army the people carry some dura stalks representing spears with which they fight with the army of Nyikango by throwing them. The members of Nyikango's army carry long thongs of twisted grass which they use as whips to disperse the Reth's army, so that they will leave the Reth in [753 828] their hands to be taken by the spirit of Nyikango. The whips are filled with the spirit and the people are frightened by them, as being touched by the whip is enough to produce madness unless gifts are offered to Nyikango's people. Princes are not [644] allowed to go near the Reth during the procession, because if the Reth is killed by any of them during the coronation procession from Debalo to Fashoda the coronation [669] is not postponed, but the people at once seize a nearby Prince, or the prince who killed him, to replace the slain Nyireth—he is not yet Reth, as he has not been possessed by the spirit of Nyikango—and the coronation continues. Because of this danger during the procession the Reth has to be protected by his policemen and the senior chiefs, who keep the ordinary people away from him.

According to the custom, when the Reth's army reaches the dry khor called Arebajur near Fashoda, which is the boundary between the two parties, a black bull is laid down. The Reth boldly walks over the bull and across to the other side to meet the party of Nyikango. As soon as they come near each other the two armies begin to fight, throwing dura stalks at each other. At that moment the Reth is seized from his army by the people of Nyikango and clothed with the spirit of Nyikango. Here Nyikango's army are busy sending people away with their whips so as to leave the Reth with the group of performers of the ceremony. After this he is taken to a round cleared place and circulated four times there before entering Fashoda. As this is done he is escorted to Fashoda by two holy maidens with the image of Nyikango [644] on his shoulder. These two maidens are taken from the performers of the coronation and later become wives to the new Reth.

In Fashoda he is taken in front of the Nyikango's shrine and placed on a silver coronation seat covered with white cloths, and the image of Nyikango and Dak are held over him in order that he might be possessed of their powers. With him are his sub-chief and the chief of Kwanyiyck holding the legs of the Reth as he is sitting on the seat. He remains in an open place for some time, with the group holding some [775] white cloths as a shelter around him. Meanwhile Nyikango's army beat their drums and sing Nyikango's songs. Here the Reth is said to be shaken by the power of Nyikango as he is being possessed by him.

643 After the performance of this, the Reth and his sub-chief are taken to one of 233 the roughly-made huts near Nyikango's shrine, where they stay for two days, with the Reth keeping the little herd of Nyikango's cattle which was brought from Debalo. This kind of action is done so as to obtain good fortune in the future during his kingship. Here he is treated as he was in Debalo, being made to do the work of a small boy, making fires for these cows and clearing their place. This work is done

643
[233]

at about four o'clock in the morning, when nobody will see him at his work but the chief only, who tells him what to do.

During these days Nyikango's army remain with the other people dancing and beating their drums, playing with the images of Nyikango and Dak outside or in front of the shrine. At the end of two days the Reth is taken to four high temples (Athurwic) on a mound, and stays in them for another two days. Nyikango's army continue beating their drums night and day, so the people from afar are attracted by them, and they come to join the dancing. At the end of this time all the senior and ordinary chiefs gather together in Fashoda at a final advisory council (Loko), where the Reth is given the right to take up the post of king. The senior chiefs make speeches giving him advice to perform his professional task justly, and after the speech of the best orator the drum is beaten as a sign of praise. At the close of the speeches he is given two silver bracelets which are put around his wrists, as a sign of his office. These bracelets represent the crown and remain with him during his reign. After this he is invested with his holy office, which cannot be taken away from him or be abdicated until he dies.

After the coronation Nyikango and his carriers remain in Fashoda for two months pending the first fall of the rains. As the first rain of the autumn appears, the party begins to leave Fashoda for Akurwa, where Nyikango's and Dak's images are kept until the coronation of another Reth.

SHILLUK "ROYAL" LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS.

By M. E. C. Pumphrey.

THE Shilluk divide themselves with great distinctness into two 565
divisions, namely "Royal Blood" (Shil., KWAR RETH) and "Shil- 644
luk" (Shil., COLLO). KWAR RETH includes, with the exception of a single
distant branch called the "Ororo," all the living patrilineal descendants
of the semi-mythical but historical Nyikang Okwa, who, in about 1540,
is supposed to have led a party from the neighbourhood of Wau into the
present Shilluk country.

Within the KWAR RETH there are three higher titles. These are
Reth, for the reigning king; *Nyireth*, for the son of a king, reigning or
dead; and *Nyareth* or *Nyinyireth*, for the son of a *Nyireth*. All other
members of the KWAR RETH are entitled *Kwar Nyireth*, which is elided
into *Kwa'nyireth*. All KWAR RETH should be addressed by prefixing their [576
title to their names or else by the use of their titles alone, an exception to 554]
this last being that you never address the Reth as *Reth* but use the appella-
tion *Wuo*.

The Shilluk say that they found the Fung in the present Shilluk 173
country and that they drove them out northwards. Undoubtedly, 565
however, many remained as an inferior caste, and there are still traces
of a Kwar Funy (Funy clan). The remaining Fung, together with the [563]
reputedly small band of Shilluk who accompanied Nyikang, presumably
form, with subsequent accretions, the ancestors of the COLLO. Nyikang
and his sons are the ancestors of the KWAR RETH.

When using the Shilluk language it is important not only to use the [576]
proper title when addressing a member of the KWAR RETH but also to 565
make certain deferential modifications in some words and expressions. 644
Only some of these modifications are necessary when addressing a mere 195
Kwa'nyireth (largely those of implying divine intervention in all verbs of
motion), but when addressing the Reth certain fictions have to be borne
carefully in mind.

For example, the *Reth* and, less rigorously, District Commissioners 195
and their assistants do not sleep. Strangely enough, they go out to 643
graze (Shil., *kwai*). They never exist unaided. When not more specifically 643

[p. 319]

195 employed they are being nursed by God (Shil., *mith yi Jwok*). They do
not go to, come from or enter a house: they are taken to, brought from
643 or stuffed into a house (as the case may be) by God. God is supposedly
648 the sole motive power of such ethereal beings. Sometimes this fiction
produces strange complications in the syntax, and another difficulty is
[576] that in replying you must be careful to use the ordinary word in relation
to yourself, thus tacitly deprecating the idea of any divine agency as far
as you are concerned.

195 The *Reth's* head is respectfully designated his "pebble," his pipe is
his "mud," his beer is his "water" and his donkey is his "dog." When
643 he sits on the ground he is said to have "come to anchor" (Shil., *amak*).
When he gets up he is, of course, lifted by God. It seems that the terms
used for royal objects are not, as might have been expected, names of
things superior to the actual object, but that they are inferior substitutes.
An explanation may be that in the magnificence of the royal presence the
objects surrounding him lose half their natural lustre.

In the following dialogue the Shilluk expressions which would be
195 used are translated as exactly as possible into English. If there is any-
643 thing comic in it, it must be stressed that this is purely incidental to the
648 purpose of this note (which is serious).

Scene—FASHODA. The District Commissioner stops the lorry
539 outside the royal houseto pick up the *Reth* to take him to Kodok to
meet the Governor.

D.C. (*by way of greeting*): You have been out grazing, Father?

RETH (*deprecatingly*): I have slept; have you been out to graze?

D.C.: Yes, thank you, I have slept.

RETH: You have been brought by God?

D.C.: I have come.

RETH: You are being nursed by God?

D.C.: I am quite well, thank you; now, are you ready to be taken by God to Kodok? If so, be lifted up by God into the front seat beside me and we will be off; . . . but wait; have you got that thing for your pebble which the Governor-General gave you?

RETH: Oh, I am so sorry. I have forgotten to get it. I will go and fetch it. Meanwhile, you be taken by God in the lorry to that tree, turn round, and be brought back here again by God. I will be back here in a second. 195

643

D.C.: Be taken away by God. (*D.C. turns the lorry round and awaits the Reth.*) You have found it? Good. Now we are off. . . . I thought you would be nursed by God in Kodok over the week-end as there are many cases I want you to see. Then you can be taken back to Fashoda by God on Monday on your dog. 648 539

Reth: Yes, I can return on Monday on my donkey.

27: Munro U-5 (1918) 1918 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

SUDAN NOTES AND RECORDS

Volume I. N° 3.

INSTALLATION

OF THE

RET OF THE CHOL (KING OF THE SHILLUKS)

BY P. MUNRO.

In writing the following description of the above event I have attempted 121 to adhere as strictly as possible to what was actually observed. This is more difficult than it appears for two reasons: first it is almost impossible to keep the mind oblivious of the innumerable traditions which have attached themselves to the ceremony and which are set forth in the main by Seligman(1) and Westermann(2), and secondly the constant ebb and flow [124] of the very large company present make accurate observation of detail in some cases almost impossible.

The small discrepancies noted in the actual ceremony as compared with 114 the account of the same as given by Seligman p. 224 are, in my opinion, 643 probably due to the fact that any enquirer would certainly be told of any existing traditions as regards various separate installations. The main essentials are the same, but in small details each installation probably varies in accordance with its special circumstances. For the sake of clearness I 128 have divided this article into two sections: *a*) Necessary preliminary remarks; *b*) The actual narrative.

---

(1) SELIGMAN VOL. B., *General Science*, 4th *Report of Wellcome Research Laboratories*, p. 216 et seq.

(2) WESTERMANN, *The Shilluk People.*

[p. 145]

A. — PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

The previous Ret Fadiet wad Kwadker died on February 22nd, 1917.
643 At his death there were various possible candidates for the Retship of
whom however only two were of real interest: Shoti wad Ajang who owing
to intrigue took up the attitude of claiming the Retship, and Fafiti wad
Yor whose claim, upheld for him by certain chiefs, was supported by Government.
156 Shoti's position was much weakened by two factors: a) by his
presumptuous attitude which was contrary to all decent Shilluk tradition,
which even considers it correct for the Ret to disappear from his house on
hearing of his probable selection, and b) by the fact that his father Ajang
was never legitimate Ret, having never entered Fashoda, but having been
allowed to usurp the position, when the Mudir of Fashoda imprisoned the
real Ret Kwadker. (N. B. The Shilluk rule of Retship makes it essential
for the new Ret to be the son of a previous legitimate Ret, thus Shoti did
not have the proper qualification.) Fafiti wad Yor, the most suitable member
of the house, whose turn it was to have the Retship, was therefore
selected for the honour. As was customary a period of interregnum ensued,
645 during which time, although the Ret-to-be utters judgements, he is merely
voicing the matured opinions of a Council of elders. It was stated to me
that this interregnum always continued till after new dura had been sown
and was ready to harvest. The general expectation was that the installation
would not occur till February, but Fafiti himself wished to have it completed
at the first opportunity. This was most natural in view of the fact
that there is no real recognition of the Ret as legitimate until after the
actual installation and in consequence it is a period of grave insecurity. Fafiti
178 therefore sent messengers to the village of Akurwa to ask if all things were
ready for the bringing of Nyakang[1] to the ceremony. A short delay occurred
825 owing to the people of Akurwa having to collect many ostrich feathers
and also ambatch for the creation of the bodily appearance of Nyakang
(Tradition states that they obtain them from south of Jebelein and that

---

[1] Nyakang. The semi divine hero and first king of the Shilluk race. Cf. SELIGMAN, p. 216. During the ceremony he is represented by a tall cylindrical body probably made of ambatch, covered with light blue cloth, and with a roundish mass of ostrich feathers as a head.

643

any ostrich they may meet will stand until they have plucked the requisite 825
feathers. Further they are believed to produce Nyakang from the river by stabbing a cow in sacrifice on the bank of the Nile).

When all was ready, Nyakang started on its journey with a large following and proceeded at a leisurely pace. The road is cleared for it from Kaka to Fashoda. It passed Kodok on 11th January 1918.

As Nyakang draws near, the selected Ret is supposed to go to Dabalu in Akwom and stay there for one night before the actual ceremony. In this specific instance Fafiti went to Akwom three days before the ceremony and was installed in Fashoda on the 4th morning. Different chiefs gave varying answers as to the number of nights which it was essential for the Ret to stay in Dabalu : it would appear however that the Ret really goes there 805
when everything is nearly ready; but if for any reason some delay occurs, a day or two is considered immaterial, which is in accordance with all native Sudan custom. In the present instance I understand Ajang wad Amoich of Akwom, whose duty it was had neglected to give due notice to the Southern chiefs, and so Kwa Mal (1) only arrived on the 16th instead of two days earlier.

B. — NARRATIVE (JANUARY 17TH, 1918).

I arrived Fashoda about 7.30 a.m. While waiting I examined the shrine of Nyakang (2) from outside, and the temporary huts (3) built for the Ret,

---

(1) Kwa (descendants of) Mal stated by WESTERMANN, p. 128 to be founded by a man 773
and woman, who came down from above. They left children on earth : their home is Malakal. They receive from the Ret the black bull over which the Ret steps before crossing the Khor; this is their reward for whipping on any that dally in following the Ret.

(2) The shrine of Nyakang consists of two well built circular mud huts with grass 778
roofs surmounted by an ostrich egg and a spear blade. The whole is enclosed in a 346
fence. The grey mud walls are painted in different coloured stripes with spots dotted on them as shown in Seligman's illustration of Nyakang at Famikang fig. 55. The guar- 644
dian is an old ex-wife of the Ret; small children are also allowed to enter. No woman 843
who is pregnant can enter the shrine. The guardian has a little hut apart.

(3) About 30 yards distant there is a practical miniature of the shrine, a temporary 342
building completely made of grass especially erected for the Ret to live in after the installation prior to his going up to his real house on the mound.

643 and also the official residence of the Ret[1]. About 11 a.m. loud drumming in the distance gave us the first intimation that Nyakang was en route from its shrine in Nyagir and was now approaching Fashoda. In the distance on the slight slope north of Fashoda a large company could be seen with Nyakang and Dak[2] borne aloft in the centre. Hundreds of Shilluk warriors were in attendance on Nyakang and its people. The men of Golbaing and Nyagir were acting as flank guards, and the whole array with the sun on its spears was most impressive. Once and again according to correct tradition Nyakang turned back and retraced its way to very near its starting point in Nyagir. This I understood to be indicative of Nyakang's uncertainty as to whether it would accept the new Ret and bestow on him its divine protection. The pauses and returns of the concourse became more frequent, but shorter in time and during them the warriors and maidens could be seen dancing. About this time a small band of four warriors sent [535] by Fafiti appeared in Fashoda and proceeded to circle round it two or three times with the peculiar dancing stride of the Shilluks. This band was shortly increased to six in number, and finally took its stand on Nyakang's road. The blowing of a horn announced the appearance of the Ret's army from Akwom, a great crowd of warriors. They came on apace until near the small khor about a quarter of a mile south of Fashoda — they were chiefly from the Southern sections, although Kodok itself immediately surrounded the Ret. It was impossible to see Fafiti himself as yet owing to the crowd.

202 643 The small party of six above mentioned now plays its part as a post between the Ret and Nyakang. The messengers all ran at full speed and appeared to be changed at the half way post. They are taking offers from the Ret to Nyakang. At first Nyakang refuses them, and turns back. Eventually

---

[1] His house consists of four fine built huts enclosed in a fence. The western hut is [644] known as Du-Kot', and in it are kept the sacred stool, the spear, the sword and the shield. The Eastern hut is for the Ret's wives, and the other two are used for any thing the Ret likes. The stool etc. are brought out for the ceremony and redeposited in Du-Kot' afterwards.

776 778 [2] Dak is the son of Nyakang: his effigy is much taller and thinner in body, but smaller in head than that of Nyakang. Both effigies are in charge of Ador son of Akol Adong of Akurwa.

he accepts, and we are informed that one cow, one bull and five spears 202
have been offered and taken. Further I was told that the messengers carry 643
straws symbolical of the above offers (the common practice of Shilluk
accounting), but this I cannot vouch for, as we could not see it. When the
amount has been fixed, Nyakang appeared to advance steadily and rapidly,
only making one sharp rectangular turn in our direction, and as I understood 688
that Nyakang's people could hold to ransom (in cows) any one whom
they caught, I made a slight alteration in my position.

At this moment from the side some seventy or eighty of the Ret's wives 643
came dancing towards Nyakang's army holding their hands out palm upwards 644
and chanting *ya bia, ya bia* «come come».

The Ret's army now moves rapidly forward to the khor. I saw in front
a small black bull, across which the Ret is said to step before crossing
the khor. Tradition states it is important for the new Ret to cross this
khor dryshod. As there was still water there, Fafiti was taken across in his 501
toror (Shilluk boat), but owing to the crowd I could not see this. Just as
the army gets to the khor, there is a sudden headlong flight by every one,
due to the right possessed by the Kwa Mal of flogging any one that tarries
or delays crossing the khor with the Ret. The Kwa Mal apparently used
their whips with good effect, and soon the whole army was across. For
this service Fafiti gives the black bull to the Kwa Mal.

I could not distinguish Fafiti, who in accordance with custom was dressed 291
in the ordinary Shilluk lau (cloth) and with a dingy red and yellow
turban on his head. He was holding by his hand a tiny girl brought by
the Kwa Okel (1). In front of him came the people of Kwa Okel dragging
forward a white bull tail first. The two armies then meet. Nyakang and

---

(1) Kwa Okel. Founded by people that Nyakang found in the Shilluk country. They 773
help in building the house of Nyakang when a king is crowned. They give one of their
daughters to the king. The girl is known as Nya Kwer (*i. e.* a girl of the authorities,
girl of taxes).

They are sometimes identified with Kwa Kelo — a section founded by Okelo a servant of Nyakang who taught the Shilluks how to prepare the mud for the Tuki (hearth stones). Another tradition states that Okelo was a Nuba, whose sister was married by Nyakang (cf. Westermann, p. 129 et seq., lists of clans made out by Rev. D. Oyler, of Doleib Hill).

643 his followers immediately put to flight the Ret's Army with whips, and the Ret is captured by Nyakang. The Ret is then deserted by all but the small girl, and is surrounded by Nyakang's company. Fafiti could now be seen holding Nyakang by its cylindrical body, so that the ostrich feathers flaunted on his head.

After a pause Nyakang and the Ret, accompanied now by a large crowd, proceed to the old place of the pond at Fashoda. Here the white bull of Kwa Okel is again seen. It has been enwrapped in clothes and blindfolded and is closely surrounded by its own people. Nyakang, the Ret, and the small girl circle twice round this, and then the Ret is lifted up and carried at full length by the Ororo(1) in company with Nyakang which is also carried aloft. As they leave the place of the pond there is a great rush and 182 the clothes are stripped of the bull and torn into shreds presumably to be 643 kept as mementos. Nyakang and the Ret are then carried to the Shrine of 778 Nyakang and in front of its threshold can be seen the sacred stool, which has been brought from the palace. This throne chair is a squat stool with four squat legs covered with white cloth and leopard skin. In front of the stool, to act as a veil, a large strip of white dammur with a small red line in it is held up. It is only effective to keep out the vulgar gaze on three sides, and at the back the Shrine of Nyakang should presumably prevent any one seeing what occurs.

Nyakang is then placed on the stool, and the Ret is said to hold its two front legs. Inside the cloth are three people, the Ret, the small girl of Kwa Okel, and the man holding Nyakang.

---

565 773 614 (1) Ororo. This class seems full of mystery : cf. Westermann, p. 129 et seq., §§ 10, 23, and 27. It is certain that the ancestor from whom they came was «Kwaret». According to Fafiti, they were the men of Odak son of Nyakang : a fight occurred between them and the Dinkas. All the older men were killed by the Dinkas, but some of the children were left. At this time Duwat should have become Ret, but his position was usurped, and much trouble fell upon the Shilluks. Finally Duwat came to his own, and he then took from these others the right of ever succeeding to the Retship. Since Duwat's time no one has become an Ororo although many have lost their rights of succession. Their present rights at an election are : *a*) to carry the Ret; *b*) to guard him throughout the ceremonies. Further at the death of a Ret they make the shroud. The Ret on election is given one girl as a wife from the children of the Ororo.

Observation here was very difficult owing to the curtain, the moving 643 crowd, and the fact that the Ret's most ancient wife would keep on dancing 123 in front of the only possible view.

I therefore moved my position to where I noticed some ancient cronies, 70 who were past the age of reverence and merely inquisitive, and from which place one could see behind the curtain. Shortly after I had moved the Ret's wazir was called for : he was Yomon wad Ker (Kwaniaret). Nyakang was then withdrawn by his attendant backwards and the Ret took his seat on the sacred stool. His wazir then grasped the two front feet of the stool presumably in token of the submission and fealty of the Shilluk race, and in recognition that Nyakang's mantle had descended upon him.

Then occurs much tomtoming and dancing, in which the people concerned are wives of the Ret and people of Akurwa, while the Ret sat like a graven image on the chair. At this time I noticed smoke issuing from the temporary tukls and asked what it was for. I was informed that the Ret's wives were warming water for the ablutions. Presently when this was ready two or three of them came and washed the new Ret's feet in hot and cold water, the significance of which is that the Ret shall be neither too cold nor too hot with his people, i. e. just.

The Ret was then lifted up by the Ororo and carried to where a bull 4 82 covered with a leopard skin had been brought by Kwa Ujalu(1) on the threshold of his «temporary hut». He appeared to make certain passes, 801 four in number, over this with a large sword, which was handed to him. The bull was then speared and carried away struggling for a short distance, 7 82 and the Ret was then taken to his hut, which ended the proceedings temporarily. As we left the scene, the sacred stool was carried past us by 4 82 four men running and taken up to the Ret's palace on the mound.

I was told Fafiti was to stay in his temporary hut for three days, and at the end of that period is taken up to his palace.

---

(1) Kwa Ujalu is probably identical with Kwa Ajal, who were founded by Jal. They 7 73 live at Nyel Wak and lay out the circle for building the house of Nyakang (cp. Westermann, p. 128 clan list compiled by Rev. D. Oyler of Doleib Hill). Local tradition says they have the right given them by Nyakang of taking captives any girls they may meet and holding them to ransom.

126 Unfortunately I was unable to stay longer, and as the actual religious ceremonies had been safely completed, I asked Yuzbashi Hussein Farag, Mamur Kodok, to return to Fashoda on the 20th and take note of any further ceremonies. The following information is from notes given to me
643 by him: «Apparently the Ret went up to his palace from the «temporary hut» during the night of the 19th. On the 20th in the morning the Ret left his palace accompanied by a large crowd. He was dressed in a game skin, and with him was the sacred stool. His escort were holding the shield. Nyakang also left his shrine escorted by a great company of people. Then
541 there occurred the mock battle with dura stalks (1). When the two armies meet, the Ret's people as though frightened of the people of Nyakang, ran towards the palace. The young girl of Kwa Okel on this day was with Nyakang's people, and when the «battle» was joined, the Ret seized her and carried her off to his palace.

778 «Nyakang then returned to the Shrine, where he is said to remain till the rainy season. Four persons are left as his escort.

«The Ret is said to stay another three days in his palace and then come
583 out and meet his chiefs. Every orator speaks in his turn and before talking puts his spear on the ground. If his speech sounds good to the people, the drum is beaten as a token of applause. The spears laid down become
422 the property of the Ret. The young girl stays with the Ret till she grows
582 up, and the Ret can then wed her to any Shilluk he pleases.»

P. Munro.

Malakal, February 1918.

---

114 (1) Seligman (p. 224) states the mock battle occurs at the khor before the ceremony. No dura stalks were used on the 17th at the time of the mock fight seen by me. It would appear to be one of those instances in which different installations vary.

776 the chief of the district offers a sacrifice to Nikawng so that the rains may
782 come. After the prayer has been offered, and the rain comes, if it comes
821 with a rushing sound they say that Nikawng walks in the storm, and the
rushing sound is made by his passing.

543 Once the departed king returned so that he could be seen by the eye of
766 man. The first kings did not die, but ascended. At last a time came when
775 the kings were to be identified more fully with the people, and they were to
776 be buried. The proper burial of the first king to receive that attention
from his subjects, was of such great importance that Nikawng returned to
give minute instructions as to how the king should be buried. Some say
that he actually appeared in the flesh. Others say that he appeared to a
certain old chief in a dream, and made known to him how one of his kingly
descendants should be buried.

776 At certain times the old woman, who has charge of his sacred house
778 places food in it for him. At the time of new moon the food is placed in his
782 house, and may be offered to him one day, or four days. Very early in the
782 morning the food is taken out, and eaten by the attendants. They say that
Nikawng has tasted it. Should the offering entirely disappear in the night
it would be taken as a serious omen. Milk is also placed in the house with
the food. Should the old woman keeper of the sacred house dream of the
king during the month, she places an offering of food in his house.

[643 Siimilar offerings are made to the other kings, and also they may be
769] made to an ancestor.

When the harvest is beginning, before the people may eat of their grain
776 they must take an offering of their first fruits to Nikawng. After Nikawng
782 has been given his taste of the first fruits the people may eat freely. An
offering of the first fruits is also taken to each of the sacred houses of the
other kings.

769 Many of them take an offering of the first fruits to the grave of an
ancestor, usually the father. When offering to a father the grain is made
into a sort of batter, and poured out on the grave. The man then says that
he has given his father a taste. The worship at the family shrine dies out
when the immediate family is all gone. In the case of the kings it is kept
by all the people.

775 The power of Nikawng is upheld to some extent by a class of religious
787
776
756

226 with their harpoons and spears and driving the fish before
them. The fish that escape the spears and are caught in the
nets are collected, and the operation is repeated again and
again until the late afternoon when either the fishing or the
fishermen are exhausted and the party returns laden with the
burden of the catch. It sometimes happens that the fishing is
not successful, and the fishermen return with a very poor
load, or even nothing at all. Once I met such a party coming
back dejected from a full day's fruitless toil; all that they had
to show as the result of eight hours' strenuous work in the
sun was a large rat dangling from the end of a spear. On
another occasion the fishing had hardly begun in earnest
before one of the men was seized by a large crocodile. I am
sorry to say that his companions in their panic ran off and
left him to his fate, but he attacked the brute with his spear
and managed to free himself. Needless to say, the fishing was
[797] abandoned for that day. The Sisters nursed the victim,
whose thigh was badly lacerated, and after some months,
thanks to their care, he recovered completely. When these
communal fishing expeditions take place, the school might
[872] as well be closed for all the learning that is done. It is just
as impossible to keep the boys to their lessons, as it would be
to keep a class of English boys if a cup-tie were being played
on the school football field. So when the vanguard of the
fishing party passes the school, we call it a day and send
the pupils off. If the results are good, there are empty places
in the classroom for many days afterwards, for the boys who
live locally stay at home as long as the good living lasts.

224 For the Shilluk youth who finds community fishing a dull
affair, in spite of the dangers of being seized by a crocodile
or being harpooned by an over-excited companion, there
are always the hazards and profits of hunting hippopotamus.
The hippo which are so numerous in the Nile, and particu-
● 643 larly in the Bahr-el-Gazal, are strictly royal game. The
687 Shilluk may hunt if they wish, but a large portion of the
224 carcase must be sent to the king in Fashoda, and a hunter
who refused to do this, or tried to conceal his 'bag', would

soon find the king's wrath heavy upon him and his cattle 224
taken to satisfy the outrage on the royal dignity. Hippo [643]
hunting is done by night as well as by day. At night the [687]
hunters lie in wait for their victim as he emerges from the river to eat and sleep. On the morning of the day of the hunt, one or two men will go out early to look for the place where the hippo has lain up during the night, and from it they trace the path he has made through the tall grass and reeds to the water. In the evening four or five hunters go to the place and lie hidden in the grass. As the beast comes up from the water they stab it with a short, heavy harpoon, and if it falls, hamstring and then kill it. To the shaft of the [411]
harpoon is attached a long line with floats of ambach wood tied at intervals. If the wounded animal is able to plunge back into the river the hunters will follow its flight in their canoes, provided there is a good moon. When the hippo surfaces for breath they attack him again with a harpoon, trying to strike him in the back of the neck and in the nose, and this second attack usually finishes him off. He submerges again, but in a couple of hours floats to the surface like an enormous balloon and is easily pushed into the shallows, and there left to be cut up at leisure the next day. The hunters in the meantime go off in search of another victim, and thus in one night may take three or four beasts. If the night is too dark for them to pursue their victim, they leave it till the morning when they search the river carefully for the floats which are sometimes found tangled up in the long grass on the bank. In the daytime they will boldly strike at a hippo from their canoe, as he surfaces to breathe, and pursue him, attacking constantly until he is killed. The people of the village nearest the spot where the carcase is [628]
floated ashore assist in cutting it up, and receive a portion of the meat and hide as their reward. The choicest parts, [643]
including most of the fat, belong to the king and must be sent to Fashoda; the chief, too, levies a generous share for himself, and the rest belongs to the hunters.

Of course a hippo hunt is not always such a one-sided affair, for occasionally the wounded animal will turn on its

Chapter VI

SHILLUK GOVERNMENT

643 Such is the relation of the Shilluk land to the lands of
neighbouring peoples and to the great countries and
powers of the modern world. Yet of these latter the Shilluk
thinks very little. To him, his country is the world, and its
government is all-important to his well-being. That govern-
[642] ment, and indeed all concept of authority, is centred in the
person of the Shilluk king.

'*L'état, c'est moi!*' No French monarch ever uttered that
dictum with more assurance than a Shilluk king might have
done had he ever heard of it, and thought it worth while to
put into words what to him and all the Shilluk was a self-
evident truth. Indeed, if a Shilluk were to enunciate his
concept of the royal dignity, he would go much further than
[642] merely to say that the king is the state, in the sense that he is
an absolute monarch who rules his people according to his
own dictates, who heeds not, indeed does not need, the
advice of counsellors; who merely has to state his wishes for
those wishes immediately to have the effect of law. He would
indeed claim such despotic power on behalf of his king,
though, lest some myrmidon of the Government was within
hearing, he would hasten to add that it was no longer
exercised and that no modern Shilluk monarch would in
fact rule his country in so arbitrary a manner, yet would
further aver that the king of the Shilluk is the state, in a way,
and to a degree, that no European Monarch ever was; that
to say that he ruled by the 'divine right of kings' would be
something of an understatement; that he was king, not
merely by divine authority and approbation, but that he
was a divine king. For every Shilluk king has been and must
be a descendant of Nyikang, the great deified hero-king of
[186] the Shilluk.

According to the tribal mythology, Nyikang was no 643
ordinary mortal. God, it declares, created a great white cow 173
which came up out of the Nile and gave birth to a man
child, Dhyang. His grandson Adak married a being who
was half woman, half crocodile, and she became the mother
of Nyikang. This affinity with the saurian inhabitants of the [825]
Nile gave Nyikang a special power over them; they came
to his assistance during his great trek whenever his further passage was disputed by superior numbers, and at his command they emerged from the river, assumed human form and fought on his side until the opposition was overcome.

Mysterious was his birth; so too was Nyikang's passing from this earth. Being more than mortal, death, the lot of mortals, was not for him, but during a dance he was enveloped in a whirlwind and carried alive into Heaven. And
there he reigns, not God, the great Jwok Atang, but the [776]
glorious divine intercessor with God for the Shilluk people.
Nyikang is very much alive indeed to the Shilluk, for his [775]
spirit enters into every Shilluk king at his installation and
dwells in him until his death.

The king, then, is the permanent manifestation of Nyi- 643
kang to his people. He is their great high priest on earth; [793]
their intercessor for them with Nyikang, even as Nyikang is
with God. Nay, more than that. It is conceivable that a European state could flourish and prosper under a sickly, or a mad, or a wicked king, or conversely, could weaken and decline, be its ruler a Hercules in strength and a Solon in administration. To the Shilluk, however, such a thing would be quite incomprehensible; to them the bodily and mental
strength of the king exercises an influence upon the whole
tribe, and upon it depends the well-being and the prosperity [731]
of the Shilluk race. Whilst he is strong and in full possession
of his faculties the country will be prosperous; should his powers decline, then too will his people weaken and wane. Hence he must not be allowed to become enfeebled physically or mentally, must not be permitted to become senescent. For him there can be no question of abdication, of

643 handing the cares of office to a younger man whilst he spends his declining years in peaceful and happy retirement. He must rule till his death, and if through physical or mental debility he should show signs of allowing the reins of government to slip from his grasp, since nothing but death can divorce him from his office, then he must die. And his loyal subjects will take steps to see that he does die; his women will briskly smother him as he sleeps and so clear the way for the election of his successor. This, then, is the Shilluk idea and tradition of government. Nyikang still rules his people by his immanence in the person of the reigning king, and while all is well with the king, all will be well with the people. It is difficult to understand the dogged persistence of that belief in view of the chronic poverty of the Shilluk, the almost annual failure of their crops, the frequent visitations of pestilence which carry off large numbers of people and cattle, the terror and havoc which was spread throughout the country during the régime of the Mahdists when the tribe was decimated by slaughter and slavery, and all this be the king never so robust in mind and body.

643 648 During the past seventy years the absolute power of the king has been severely shaken, at least in temporal affairs. When the Mahdists stalked the land, the kings were generally in hiding. Two were slain in battle, and one, falling into the hands of his enemies, was hanged and his head ignominiously displayed in Kodok, the headquarters of the Mahdist governor, but a few miles from the royal village of Fashoda.

After the defeat of the Kalifa at Omdurman, Kitchener commenced the formidable task of establishing law and order throughout the whole country. Fashoda, a collection of squalid mud huts on the Nile, blazed momentarily in the international headlines and then sank once more into its former obscurity. It might be mentioned here that the term '"Fashoda" Incident' is something of a misnomer. The historic meeting between Kitchener and Marchand took place, not at Fashoda, but at Kodok, some eight miles north
[103] of the Shilluk capital. The name was transferred to Kodok

by the Egyptian rulers of the country during the nineteenth 643
century, but it was never accepted by the Shilluk. 648

One of the first steps taken by the new government [103]
towards the settlement of the Shilluk was the deposing and exiling of the king, Kur, whose conception of the royal duties and prerogatives boded ill for the health and well-being of such of his subjects as chanced to cross him in his wrath or thwart him in his desires. Hitherto many a Shilluk Urias or Naboth whose comely wife or humble possessions had aroused envy in the royal breast, had paid for it with his life. The tribal history even recounts that one king killed his wife because she could spit further than he could! With the removal of Kur, however, there went too the King's arbitrary power of life and death over his subjects, and although the government of the country and the administration of justice was still largely left in the hands of the king and his chiefs, it was henceforward to be administered under the eye of the local British officials.

The powerful position and the respect which a Shilluk 643
king enjoys are not, however, without their price. The 682
saying that 'Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown' may be trite, but it is true; with the pomp and circumstance of the royal state go the cares and worries of government which have undoubtedly caused monarchs many a sleepless night. But although the burden of their office may have been accepted as the price to be paid for its power and glory, and although too there are numerous instances in history of the wearer of the royal diadem dying at the hands of the assassin or the public executioner, still it is not the generally accepted thing that he must thus inevitably perish, and that to assume the purple is in effect to sign his own death warrant. Yet that is the way with the king of the Shilluk. As I said above, upon the physical and mental fitness of the king is deemed to depend the well-being of the whole people, and any weakening of his bodily powers or impairing of his mental faculties means that he must be put out of the way, so that the country may flourish under a more lusty and vigorous
ruler. Moreover, it is the recognized right of any potential [669]

643 682 669 king, that is, the son of a former king, to attempt to kill the reigning king and seize the power for himself. The king is, as it were, considered fair game for anyone who, provided he has the requisite credentials, considers himself strong enough singlehandedly to take the life and the title of his lord.

Uneasy then, indeed, is the head which wears the Shilluk crown, for the owner may wake to feel throttling fingers encircling his throat, or heavy folds of cloth muffling his face, or, should he have any reason to think that a pretender seeks his throne, may spend night after night in unwinking vigil, divested of clothes and ornaments which might betray his presence or movements, carrying a blackened spear, prowling ceaselessly around his own village, pausing where the shadows are darkest, magnifying each noise of the night and interpreting it as the stealthy approach of a marauder intent upon his life. I must confess that I have never heard of an attempt being made upon the life of the king by a would-be usurper in recent years, but it would appear that the possibility is always present, and it seems that an attempt to assassinate King Papiti was made about 1930 by a son of the deposed king, Kur. During the past ten years three Shilluk kings have died, and although there is no certainty that any one of them was violently 'assisted' to die, there is equally no certainty that he was not.

643 731 [775] Once the king is dead, either from natural causes or otherwise, a great disquietude and uneasiness settles on the country. Officially 'the land has ceased to be'; the spirit of Nyikang has lost its dwelling place and the country and the people have temporarily lost their protector. All manner of evils may fall on them; famine, pestilence, invasion, and—what comes nearer home and is always a potential danger during the interregnum—civil war may break out should any one of the nyireth who has a sufficiently strong following make a bid to seize the throne for himself. Hence, after the death of a king, the election of his successor is proceeded with as quickly as possible, but it is only with his inauguration, about a year afterwards, that the shadow of disaster is lifted and the land may be said to live again.

766 535 at length the drums cease to throb, the last of the animals are sacrificed and the meat distributed to the dancers and the people disperse to their homes. The king is dead. . . .

● 643 The country has not, however, remained without a king all this time. The period of interregnum is one of disquiet, 666 and there is always the real fear that one of the nyireth may [642] make a bid for the throne. As soon as possible, then, after the [669] king's death, within a few days in fact, the electorate council meets to choose the new king. This council is made up of eleven chiefs of the Colo, the descendants of the original companions of Nyikang, and three members of the royal houses.

[175] [631] When Nyikang first settled the country he divided it into eleven major districts, appointing a chief to each. These chiefs were all Colo since, as Nyikang was the first Reth, the Kwareth had not then come into being. These eleven chiefs form the board of electors, and with them sit three of the [614] Kwareth, one from each of the three royal houses, those of Papiti, Fadiet and Yor, whose sons are eligible for the kingship. Among these three families there may be as many as forty or fifty nyireth, entitled as such to consideration for the vacant throne. It is generally accepted, however, though not a hard and fast rule, that the three royal families should provide a king in rotation, and it is certainly understood that the family of the late king is automatically ruled out. Attention is therefore concentrated on the claims of the candidates from the other two houses, with the weight of opinion in favour of that one which has the more remotely provided a king. Many of the nyireth are eliminated at once on account of old age, extreme youth, physical debility, weakness of character, etc., and the merits and demerits of the rest are given serious consideration, until the number is reduced to half a dozen or less from among whom the final choice is made. How selection is finally made is the secret of the council. Sometimes the late king may have 'adopted' a certain nyireth, and thus indicated his wish in the matter of his successor. Such an indication does not mean that the king's protégé will certainly be chosen but it will have great

weight in the deliberations of the electorate. Sometimes, too, 643
when the final choice is a difficult one, it would seem that 666
the selectors have recourse to augury and divination. A [787]
number of small stones, one for each candidate, is placed in a
fierce fire. A stone that glows red indicates that, under the
prince it represents, cattle will be plentiful in the country;
a white-hot stone would presage an abundance of grain in
the new rule; one glowing both white and red would entail
an era of plenty both in cattle and grain, whilst that which
merely blackens and bursts would unanimously be rejected.

When the decision is at last reached, one of the great chiefs 643
goes unobtrusively and by night to the village where the
king-elect is living. During the deliberations of the electorate
all nyireths are required to remain in their own homes and
not to approach the neighbourhood of Fashoda; this precaution [669]
is taken to ensure that no nyireth should rush the
capital and usurp the power for himself. The chief challenges
the nyireth to a mock battle and when he has thus given a
token of his prowess and valour the news of his election is
formally broken to him. He is brought quietly, again under
cover of night, to Fashoda, and at daybreak inducted with
ceremony into his capital. When these preliminaries are over
and the reth-elect is settled in Fashoda, the news of his election
is noised abroad, and chiefs and nyireths come in from
all parts of the country to pay their respects to their new
king. The situation has become somewhat easier now, since 643
with the accomplished fact, there is little likelihood of an 669
armed insurrection taking place. There is always of course
the possibility of any nyireth asserting his right to the throne
and proving it by slaying the king in single combat, and in
former days it was customary for the king to slaughter as [178]
many of the nyireths as he could lay his hands on—a most
effective method of reducing the potential danger to himself.

The period between the election and the solemn installation 643
of the king is roughly a year. During this time the land 642
is, as it were, dead, for the spirit of Nyikang still lacks its [775]
habitual abode, and is under interdict. No great public
dances may be held, except the funeral dances for the late [535]

643

642 reth, no building may be done and the usual burning off of
535 the grass in the early dry season is forbidden.

643 During this time also active preparations are on foot for the
796 ceremonies of installation. Iron must be obtained and
special ceremonial and presentation spears forged; silver,
326 ivory and ostrich feathers procured for the making of
301 bracelets and other ornaments; a hunting party has to make
inroads (either without the knowledge or with the connivance
237 of the government) upon a strictly protected species of antelope
in order to obtain the highly prized skins which
serve the purpose of purple and ermine in the installation
326 ceremonies. The forging of the sacred spears is introduced
with special ceremony; with appropriate sacrifice new fire
by the immemorial method of the friction of hard wood upon
soft is made and the implements of the blacksmiths blessed.

643 There is great activity during this period of preparation
796 in Akurua in the north of the country, Nyikang's own
sacred village. It was from here that the hero-king
778 disappeared in a whirlwind from the sight of mortal man, and
775 it is to Akurua that he returns in order that he may go to
Fashoda to install his successor as reth. In the shrine at
Akurua are housed the sacred effigies of Nyikang and his
son, Dak, which are carried in procession from Akurua to
Fashoda for the installation. These effigies consist of heads of
237 ostrich feathers fixed in bamboo sockets, and are in fact
fetishes, since the souls of Nyikang and Dak are believed to
inhabit them. On the death of a king the old effigies are
destroyed and new ones made for the installation of the
reth-elect.

643 When preparations at Fashoda are completed, messengers
796 are sent to Akurua to inform Nyikang that it is time to march
to Fashoda. The effigies are then carried out, borne aloft by
778 members of a clan whose special prerogative this is, and
614 start on the journey to the capital, a distance of about
seventy miles. The procession moves south at a smart pace.
Dak's mop of feathers on the end of a long bamboo pole
looks like an oversized feather duster; Nyikang's head of
ostrich plumes is very much bigger than that of his son's,

and the bamboo socket into which it is fitted is shorter and 643
thicker. Behind the effigies are carried Nyikang's 'bed', a 796
long forked stick upon which he is propped at night and a [778]
basket of food for his refreshment during the journey. The
bearers are surrounded by men of the same clan whose duty [614]
it is to keep spectators at a distance, and behind follow
Shilluk from the district into which the procession has
entered, who act as an escort as far as the next section. The
march is kept up at a good pace to the accompaniment of [533]
songs sung in honour of Nyikang and Dak. At sunset a halt
is made at the nearest large village. Nyikang and Dak are
put away for the night, Nyikang being propped up on his
'bed' so that he doesn't touch the ground. His bearers and
escort are accommodated in the village, huts being evacuated [574]
to receive them and food prepared for them. The next
morning the march is resumed, the people flocking to the
road from all sides to pay homage to their hero-king as he
passes by and joining in the unceasing chants of praise in [533]
his honour. Eventually, after some five days on the road,
the environments of Fashoda are reached. A village, Adodo,
has been set aside for Nyikang and his followers, and they [574]
rest there until the day appointed for the installation, about three days hence. During all this time the reth-elect has remained in Fashoda, but when he is informed that Nyikang has arrived at Adodo, he moves away from the capital and takes up his residence at Debalo, a few miles to the south. Nyikang is, as it were, in rightful possession of the territory, and the king-to-be is in the position of an intruder until he has proved his fitness to rule.

Between Fashoda and Debalo lies a long narrow water
course, Khor Arepejur. This khor is the traditional boundary [131]
fixed by Nyikang himself, between the north and the south. On the morning of the first day of the installation ceremonies, the reth-elect and his followers march towards the khor, the reth leading by the hand a little girl who is his 'bride' and who later will be the cause of a dispute between Nyikang and himself. Arrived at the khor the reth finds stretched out across his path a black bull, over which he steps. (Formerly

643 it was an old man who was stretched across the path for the 796 king and his followers to step across. With such a large following, there was more stepping on, than stepping across, and the man was trampled to death.) His partisans follow suit and the whole army crosses the watercourse and marches towards Fashoda. As it does so, the supporters of Nyikang, bearing the two effigies in their midst, are seen approaching from Adodo. The two forces halt a short distance apart, threats are shouted, weapons are brandished—not spears, fortunately, but millet stalks—there is the usual preliminary feinting and dodging and half-hearted rushes, and then the two armies hurl themselves forward and join in the great mock battle. The air is thick with dust raised by the padding feet of the combatants and clouded with flying millet stalks. When the air clears it is seen that the reth is no longer at the head of his forces. His army has been defeated and he has been captured by Nyikang and carried into Fashoda.

Nyikang, closely followed by the reth, advances to an open space in front of the shrine. A cow is sacrificed and then a [782] screen of white cloth is erected in front of the doorway of the [778] shrine, and the sacred stool of Nyikang is placed behind it so as to be hidden from the public view. The effigy of Nyikang is put down upon the stool and a period of chanting and invocation ensues, the reth meanwhile kneeling and clasping the legs of the stool. Then Nyikang is lifted up and carried into the shrine and the reth takes his place on the stool. This is the solemn moment of the installation; it is the equivalent of the crown of kingship being placed on the head of the monarch. The Shilluk believe that at this moment the [787] spirit of Nyikang enters into and takes possession of the body of the reth. After some time spent in communing with Nyikang, the reth, accompanied by his 'bride', who during all this time has never left his side, leaves the place of installation and moves across to a group of huts temporarily erected for [782] his use. Another cow is sacrificed and the king enters one of [783] the huts for the ritual washing of his feet by his wives. This bathing is done in hot and cold water and signifies that the

643

king must not be 'hot' or 'cold' with his subjects, but 796
just. [783]

During the rest of the day the king remains in the seclusion of his temporary camp. Towards evening all fires are extinguished and new fire is made by twisting a sharpened [372] stick in a hole made in another stick. The smouldering tinder is fanned into a bright flame, and the sacred fire is carried off to light the fires in the village.

During the next two days the reth remains in seclusion and certain secret rites are performed. On the evening of the second day he leaves his temporary camp and takes up his residence in a hut on an eminence called Aturwic, just outside Fashoda. He is traditionally 'enticed' there by a girl, and for the first time since the commencement of the ceremonies he deserts his young 'bride' who remains behind in the camp. The next morning the king remembers his bride and asks for her. He is told that she cannot be found and he sends messengers to look for her. They return and say that during the night Nyikang has come and carried her off. The king then sends to Nyikang demanding the return of the girl, but Nyikang flies into a rage and calls his army together to punish this impertinence. Nyikang and Dak now appear outside the shrine where they have lain since the morning of the installation and are joined by a third effigy, Nyikang's [778] second son Col, who is composed of grey ostrich feathers and rope. The three effigies surrounded by their followers now aroused to a pitch of excitement by continuous drumming and dancing, advance towards Aturwic and the king and his *entourage* descend from the mount to meet the aggressors. The king advances boldly towards his opponents and hurls his millet stalk 'spear', which is a signal for a general onrush by his supporters. This time it is Nyikang who is vanquished. The 'bride' is snatched away from him and hurried up the mount to safety and in vain do the warriors of Nyikang counter-attack to recover her. At length they fight their way to the foot of the mound but then Nyikang calls a truce and quietly ascends the eminence accompanied by his sons. Apparently all is settled amicably. The reth has proved

643 796 himself a worthy successor of his great ancestor; Nyikang reappears and goes back to his shrine where he remains until he returns to Akurua.

The concluding ceremonies take place the following day when the chiefs from all over the country gather to do fealty to their new king. The king, seated on the sacred stool of Nyikang, faces the assembled chiefs. Each one comes forward [537] in turn carrying a spear. He makes a speech of praise and exhortation, and at the conclusion drives his spear into the ground to signify that he will never raise it against the king. The king replies briefly to the gathering, thanking the chiefs for their protestations of loyalty and promising to rule justly. [782] After the assembly a bull is sacrificed, and the reth makes a tour of inspection of Fashoda. He pauses outside his father's house, a sheep is stretched out before the threshold, he steps over it and disappears into the interior. He has come into his own.

All over the country there is a general feeling of buoyancy and relief. The shadow is lifted from the land. Nyikang is among his people again . . . long live the king!

643 797 Perhaps I may be pardoned if to this account of the position, the installation and death of the reth, I add a few words on the death of one of the recent kings, Papiti, because of the interest it has for our mission and its work. Papiti must be one of the longest lived of Shilluk kings. The twenty-ninth in succession from Nyikang, he was the son of Yor who had been hanged by the Mahdists in Kodok. He was elected king in 1917, and died in 1943; thus his reign extended over a period of twenty-six years.

From the time of the accession of King Papiti dates the [798] prosperity of the Catholic missions in the Shilluk country, or at least dates the time when they ceased to suffer persecution at the hands of the Shilluk and were permitted to live and do their work in peace, for Papiti had always shown himself a firm friend of the missionaries. He was a frequent visitor to the mission at Lul and often sent presents of hippopotamus fat, a rare delicacy, and butter. It was his authority and good

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

sense that saved the struggling mission of Detwok from destruction at the hands of the grief-stricken and enraged villagers when in 1931 the wall of a brick kiln collapsed, killing several boys and girls. He had on several occasions expressed his wish to become a Christian but owing to the political and religious repercussions that would have followed had he, the ruler and high priest of the Shilluk, taken such a step whilst in the prime of life, he had perforce to defer his conversion, but hoped for the grace of baptism before he died. God granted him his desire.

King Papiti became ill in mid-September, 1943. He had indeed been unwell for some time, but was afraid to let it be known to anybody in case the news brought the traditional smotherers to his hut. (On a similar occasion some years before he had had to spend lonely nights in the forest, in fear of his life, until he had recovered from his illness.) Now it was too late for medical skill to do anything for him and he was dying.

We heard the news in Detwok from Eugene, his nephew, one of our best Christians and a catechist. He proposed to go to Fashoda to ask the king if he had meant what he said about becoming a Christian. Being so close a relative of Papiti's and yet having no claim to the throne, Eugene would easily be admitted to his presence. He set off through the swamps and the mud (it was in the middle of the rains) to cover the twenty miles to Fashoda. On arrival there he was eagerly welcomed by Papiti who reiterated his desire for baptism. Eugene therefore gave him some preliminary instruction and without further delay continued as fast as the conditions of the terrain would permit, to Lul, some twelve miles further south. He arrived at the mission in the early hours of the morning and at once aroused Fr. Hurst from his bed. But let Fr. Hurst himself proceed with the narrative:

> In the Shilluk country there are no papers, but news travels fast nevertheless, and we heard that the king was sick. On Saturday, September 18th, at 4.30 a.m. I was

643 awakened by a man calling out at my door; very sleepily
797 I asked what was the matter and he replied, 'The king is
sick and is calling for the Father to come to him.' The
man who called me was a nephew of the king and had
already given the king some instruction in the Faith as he
was well able to do—he is a catechist in our Detwok
mission. I first said Mass and after some breakfast set out
for Fashoda, a distance of some twelve miles. I was accompanied
by the catechist and the local medical dispenser
who was also a Catholic. I had to walk, for the swamps
were full and the grass was very high. There was not a
breath of wind. Indeed it was a pleasure to wade through
the swamps for the cool water was very refreshing to tired
and hot feet. We pushed on fast and made only one stop
of about five minutes, whilst my escort had a drink. I
was offered milk, but as unboiled milk is very dangerous
in this country, I refused. When we arrived at Fashoda
the whole place had the silence of a sick room, no dogs
[195] barked and all the people spoke in whispers as is the
custom in Fashoda. I was taken at once to the king's
[644] dwelling, which is just the same as any other Shilluk
house, except that more care had been taken over its
construction. In the house were four women fanning the
[237] king with the wings of a saddle-billed stork and the eldest
son of Papiti was there too. As soon as I entered the hut,
the king sat up and greeted me; he was lying on the
[513] floor just like any other Shilluk, but he had a thin mattress
on top of the usual cow-hide. He seemed very pleased to
see me and at once told the women to leave the hut and
I began the instruction. My task was easy for he knew
Catholic doctrine and believed it; he knew all the obligations
of the Faith. When I put the question to him about
his wives he said, 'Father, my soul is the main thing now,'
and before witnesses he gave me his promise to be a man
of one wife. I baptized him 'Joseph' after our Patron, and
it was also the feast day of St. Joseph of Cupertino. He
received baptism with great devotion and gave me the
impression of understanding to the full the meaning of the

Sacrament he was receiving. He was not unmindful of my 643
needs and sent word that food was to be prepared for me. 797
I was taken into another house—a very special one into [343]
which few but the king and his queens enter. A woman
brought me a skin to sit on and then, on her two knees,
presented me with roasted maize cobs and native beer. I [262]
was in very great need of a drink for though we had waded
through lots of water we could not drink it; if we did,
dysentery was sure. This special house contained a very
fine collection of animal skins and also the spear of Nyi- [778]
kang, a thing most sacred to the Shilluk. There also was
a stick on which were recorded the years of the king's
reign. I was sent a wing of a saddle-billed stork to use as
a fan and these are, as a rule, reserved to the king himself.

At two in the afternoon I said good-bye to the king who
made me a further present of a goat, and I set out for
home. King Joseph, as he was now, had very thoughtfully
ordered an ambach canoe to be brought so that I could [501]
cross a very deep swamp on a path that made our journey
much shorter. I was feeling very tired, and every mile my
feet felt like lumps of lead—the last mile seemed very long.
But I arrived home about five o'clock and I announced
in church the good news that the king was baptized and
all the Catholics of the mission rejoiced. There were no
hostile remarks from pagans that I ever heard of. King
Joseph, formerly Papiti, died on September 22nd.

By King Papiti's express wish the customary temporary 766
interment was not proceeded with, and on the night of the
day following his death, he was taken to his own village of
Pareth Papiti (Village of King Papiti) and there buried.
The traditional funeral dances were held in his honour, but [535]
took place much earlier than usual, only about six weeks
after his death.

CHAPTER VII

JUSTICE

692 A GREAT part of the work of the king and his chiefs is the
648 administration of justice. This is done under the super-
[643] vision of the local British officials, and, of course, has been
restricted in some ways. The former ruthless butchery and
[681] mutilation for petty offences is no longer tolerated, nor is
the sentence of death and the execution of such a sentence permitted to them. Apart from this, however, it is the policy of the Sudan Government to encourage the various native peoples of the country to administer their own territory according to their age-long traditions and usages. And indeed, a harassed District or Assistant District Commissioner with only a handful of police to help him in administering an enormous area, being neither argus-eyed nor possessed of the power of being in several places at once, can attend personally only to a fraction of the cases that continually come up for attention. He will deal with the more serious criminal offences, but the majority of disputes and petty
[643] crimes among the Shilluk are heard and decided by the king
[634] and the district chiefs.

577 Whether justice as we understand it, the meting out to an individual exactly what is his due, is always done in these cases is another matter. To say, as is often said, that the African has a strong sense of justice and resents being treated unjustly, is not strictly true. He certainly resents being treated unjustly, but often he equally resents being treated justly when the judgment given is detrimental to
695 himself. Hence, in a criminal case in which he is the accused,
or in litigation with his neighbour, he will cheerfully swear to
577 tell 'the truth, the whole truth,' meaning all the time 'and
nothing like the truth.' Then he spins a most convincing tale which none of the listeners believes but cannot fail to

776 God is considered as being far off, aloof from mankind,
caring nothing for the things He has created. Men do not
[782] then approach Him directly, nor, at least on great public
occasions, presume to offer sacrifice to Him. Approach to
God can only be made through the great mediator, Nyikang.
It is Nyikang who, though he led his people into and
left them in so sorry a plight, is reverenced as the Father
and Saviour of the Shilluk people, is worshipped as a demi-
[775] god, and is thought of as always dwelling among them in
[782] the person of the reigning king. To him are all prayers
made and sacrifices offered; in his honour sacred dances are
[778] performed. His numerous shrines, located in different parts
of the country in which his spirit is believed to dwell, are
[793] carefully tended by the Bang Reth, to whom fall the perquisites
of the meat of the sacrifices and the tributes of grain
willingly surrendered from a meagre harvest in the sacred
name of Nyikang.

776 The king, as the personification, as it were, of Nyikang
● 643 on earth, will offer the principal sacrifices on important
782 occasions during the year, for example, to obtain a plentiful
[789] rainfall and a bumper harvest, for the averting of the plague
[731] of weaver birds which descend on the country in their
millions each year and devour the ripening grain, in times
of drought and flood, of epidemic among the people and
plague which is carrying off the cattle. On these and similar
occasions is Nyikang invoked and sacrifice offered to him by
[634] the king himself and the district chiefs, and yet it is clearly
understood by all that it is not Nyikang himself who will
bestow the benefit or avert the disaster, but God, moved to
clemency by the intercession of Nyikang for his people. And
so the second and last article of the Shilluk Creed would run
'and in Nyikang, Son of God, Father of the Shilluk people,
and our only intercessor with God for us'.

775 Alongside the cult of Nyikang, there is also a cult of the
769 dead. The Shilluk have only a vague notion of life after
death in the Christian sense. They do, indeed, speak of the
Pa Jwok, God's country, which is the abode of Nyikang and
their ancestors, and which is reached only after months of

851 ordeal'. He brings a sheep to the village where the girl is;
684 a corner of the animal's ear is cut off and the piece put into
695 a bowl of water and the man, the girl and the baby are
[825] sprinkled with the resultant blood and water. If by the
[787] following morning the child is still alive the man is adjudged
to have lied and must pay compensation as above. If, however, the baby should die during the night, then the girl is held to have accused the man falsely.

851 During the reign of King Kur, whose despotic methods of
684 government resulted in his being removed from office, a
695 much grimmer and more realistic trial by ordeal was enacted.
178 The man and the girl were brought to a channel of the Nile
[643] where a large crocodile habitually dwelt. By some means
● [825] this brute was called up from the depths and the pair placed
equidistant from it were made to swim across the channel, or, if they could not swim, were launched on flimsy rafts. The one that the crocodile seized was deemed to be guilty of lying. It is on record that one youth about to be put to the test in this manner protested thus, 'I know that I am innocent all right, but how does the crocodile know that?'

846 After the proceedings of the naming and the trying of the
852 lovers is concluded, the mother is allowed to have her child.
[553] If it should be a boy, the father, who has been informed of
the birth and sex of the child though as yet he is not allowed to see him, sends a present of a miniature harpoon, presumably indicative of his desire that his son should grow up to be a mighty hunter of hippopotami. Then a small basket is
852 woven and filled with ashes of burnt cow dung. One of the
604 baby's maternal uncles hangs the basket round his waist
calling upon Nyikang to bless the child and to make him a good husbandman. (The basket containing the ashes represents the large family basket filled with grain.) He then walks round the hut where the baby is, beats upon the wall with the basket and then throws it into the road. If the child is a girl the ashes are mixed with water and the uncle makes models of a bull and a cow. Nyikang's blessing is invoked upon the child that at her marriage she may command a good

763 sound that is prolonged for about ten minutes and is renewed at intervals during the day as relatives or friends of the deceased arrive for the funeral.

766 I have said previously that the Shilluk are fond of wander-
ing from their own villages. They will settle and live for
years at the other end of the country, perhaps among the
people of another tribe or in another province. But no
matter how long a man has been away from his own people,
he will always endeavour to return to die among them, and
if he should fall ill whilst away from home he will try to let
his kinsfolk know in order that they may come and fetch him,
or will have himself carried back. If, however, he should die
766 away from home the news of his death is greeted with the
customary wailing, and some member of his family must
visit his grave and bring back some of the earth from it;
this is buried near the dead man's home and the funeral
ceremonies are enacted over it as though the corpse itself
were present.

761 It is the Shilluk tradition that the king should not be
682 permitted to die a natural death, but should be ceremoni-
643 ously smothered by his womenfolk. The same is true of a chief,
but whether the reasons for the killing in this case are the
same as those which decide the death of the king is not clear.
Certainly a chief who had been ill for a month and showed
no signs of recovery would be speedily put out of the way.
888 The custom seems to extend to other cases too; an old man
would be smothered as also would be one suffering from a
long and painful illness, and the same is done too, in some
cases at least, shortly before death would take place natur-
ally. I myself saw a dying boy being smothered by his own
mother. She propped him up between her knees and passed
her hand over his nose and mouth. I thought that she was
wiping away the mucus that was coming from his nose and
mouth, and it was only when he had ceased to breathe that I
realized to my horror that she had killed him. When ques-
tioned about the reasons for this 'mercy' killing the Shilluk
are vague and evasive. They say, for instance, that it is a
humiliation for anyone to die naturally.

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

'When Father Tappi and I started the first mission among 797*
the Shilluk at Lul, they did not want us; they hated us and 186
twice attempted to kill us.' During the first few months the 798
natives twice attempted to take their lives by throwing spears at them. One of their greatest troubles was the learning of the language, a tongue absolutely unknown to Europeans. The Shilluk could not bear the thought that foreigners should learn their language and did all they could to prevent them from doing so. They answered their questions falsely, and laughed scornfully at the attempts of the missionaries to write down the strange words; twice, too, they set fire to their houses so as to destroy their work. With time this difficulty was overcome, but even when the people could understand them they refused to listen to what they had to say. 'How is it possible,' they asked, 'for there to be anything good in heaven? Even the birds come down to eat so as not to die of hunger. We Shilluk are made to eat and dance; you foolish men can have your heaven.' They ran away from men so cruel as to wear on their breasts a cross with a man fixed to it. Alone in their mud huts, often hungry and often 797*
ill with malaria, the missionaries had only their faith and their trust in God to keep them at their posts. The health of the laybrothers became seriously impaired and yet not one Shilluk would come to work for them. To add to their troubles, the rains stopped earlier than usual that year and all their crops were ruined; the work they had done was wasted, and they were left even without seed to plant.

Little by little, however, the natives began to approach the mission, first out of curiosity to see the work the white men were doing, and then to beg, whilst the king showed his interest by sending occasionally for a bottle of brandy, some money or some other present. At the same time the missionaries began to gain a reputation as doctors and were thus able to make friends with some of the people and baptize some children before they died. In 1903 the king deigned [613]
to visit the mission and stayed the night with the Fathers; he ordered the nearby villagers to send milk and instructed

* 797 [643] them as to how they were to treat his friends, as he called the missionaries. Conditions improved after this, and also by the arrival in June of three Sisters of Verona, with Mother Guiseppa Scandola as Superior, to assist in the mission work. When Mother Guiseppa received orders to start for Lul, one of the Sisters in Assuan told her that she envied her good fortune in going to work in the mission. 'Do not worry,' she replied, 'in four months you will come to take my place.' Soon after her arrival in Lul, Father Beduschi became very ill and was at death's door, but Mother Guiseppa, who was herself ill at the time, sent him this message: 'Have no fear, Father; you will not die, you have hard work to do for the Shilluk. I am old and useless; I shall die in your stead.' Two days later, Father Beduschi, completely recovered, gave the last Sacraments to the Sister, and she died on September 1st. Her successor as Superior was the very Sister to whom she had made the prophecy in Assuan. She was a woman remarkable for her devotion and holiness. In this [643] [648] same year, too, the British Government deposed the king, Kur, whose successor, Fadiet, was much more friendly to the mission.

From this time onwards the number of Christians began to grow, and the mud hut which had served as a church was [346] replaced by a larger brick building in 1911. The priest who was Superior of Lul at that time was Father Banholzer, who was noted for his extensive knowledge of the Shilluk language and tribal customs and the untiring zeal with which he worked among the native people, so that many Shilluk remember him still as the 'Great Father'. One day in 1914 he shot a hippopotamus and was out in the sun for several hours dividing the meat, as a result of which he had an attack of sunstroke. He went to Kodok to be treated by the doctor, but died there in the arms of a native, and the first intimation of his death which his fellow priests at Lul received was the arrival of his body carried by natives in a boat.

[114] A successor of Father Banholzer was Father Kohnen, who wrote a Shilluk grammar and translated the New Testament and a Bible History into that language.

convert him. In Detwok he acted as cook, and one day the 797*
native boy who helped him came to Father Beduschi and [164]
said that Brother must have leprosy because he picked up very hot things without feeling anything. It was true, and the Brother lived the rest of his saintly life in a leper colony, which he called his parish.

In 1925 the Sisters arrived from Lul to take possession of the huts which had been built for them. Matters progressed slowly, but the years 1931 and 1932 seemed to see an awakening of interest among the Shilluk in matters of religion. This did not last, but the missionaries found it necessary to build a new church as the original mud building
was not large enough for the congregation. They taught [177]
the natives how to make bricks and cement and how to [339]
build.

During the making of the bricks for this church an accident occurred which nearly resulted in the closing of the mission. On April 1st, 1931, some youths and girls were carrying bricks out of the kiln, singing and pushing one another as they worked. Suddenly the whole pile collapsed, burying three girls and two boys. Some women who were going for water gave the alarm and soon the compound was full of frantic natives all shouting agreement with the chief who said: 'You see what happens when you allow your children to work for the foreigners.' They ran shrieking when a Father or Sister managed to extricate one of the victims, but none of them would help to carry out the dying children.
The three girls died immediately and one of the boys a week 761
later. Papiti, the king, was soon on the spot and held a 643●
conference with his chiefs, all but two of whom were clamour- 797*
ing for the expulsion of the missionaries. The king listened to their speeches and then rose to speak himself. 'Is not this a thing permitted by God?' he asked. 'Did the foreigners do it deliberately? If a crocodile takes one of our young men, on whom do we take revenge? Is this not an accident, too? Have not the foreigners helped us often? Who take care of
our sick? Is not this permitted by God?' The chiefs rose: 643
'You have spoken well,' they said, 'let us go.' The mission 797*

* 797 was saved. Of the two chiefs who were on the side of the
643 missionaries one is now the father of the best Catholics and catechists in Detwok, and it is pleasant to recall that King Papiti received the grace of Baptism before he died, as has already been related.

Father Brambilla, who was Superior at Lul at the time, hastened to Detwok when he heard the sad news and offered to give to the family of each of the dead girls ten cows, the amount of dowry which each would have had on marrying, but the king would not hear of it, giving as his reason: 'The crocodile does not give cows; this was an accident.' Soon afterwards the people assembled for the solemn mourning dance for the dead children, and Father Brambilla sent four bulls for the funeral feast.

* 797 The church was completed in the same year by Father Cotta, and under his guidance the school also made great progress. It was his dream to have a Central School there for the whole Shilluk mission to which boys would come from Lul and Tonga to attend the upper classes, but this scheme was not realized whilst he was there.

The mission of Kodok, as it was known, was raised to the status of an Apostolic Prefecture in 1938 and the Fathers of St. Joseph's Society of Mill Hill took over the staffing of the district from the Verona Fathers who had worked there for nearly forty years. The first leader was Mgr. Wall, who had already seen many years of service in Kenya. He had his headquarters at Malakal, another mission in Shilluk territory, and the Prefecture was renamed after this place in 1949. Since the coming of the Mill Hill Fathers the good work has gone on slowly, but the difficulties still remain immense; a total absence of civilization, complete indifference to religion on the part of the population in general, trying climatic conditions and wretched communications make the missionary's task hard and call for great patience and a spirit of optimistic endurance. Much effort
[871] has been put into the advancement of education. Father Cotta's dream of a Central School in Detwok has been realized, and schools for both boys and girls as well as